

CAN A SCHOOL SHOOTING EVER BE EXPLAINED?
THIS STORY COMES DAMN CLOSE. PG. 114

Esquire

AUGUST 2008

MAN AT HIS BEST

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OF OUR TIME.
THE
VICTIMIZATION
OF THE WHITE
AMERICAN MALE

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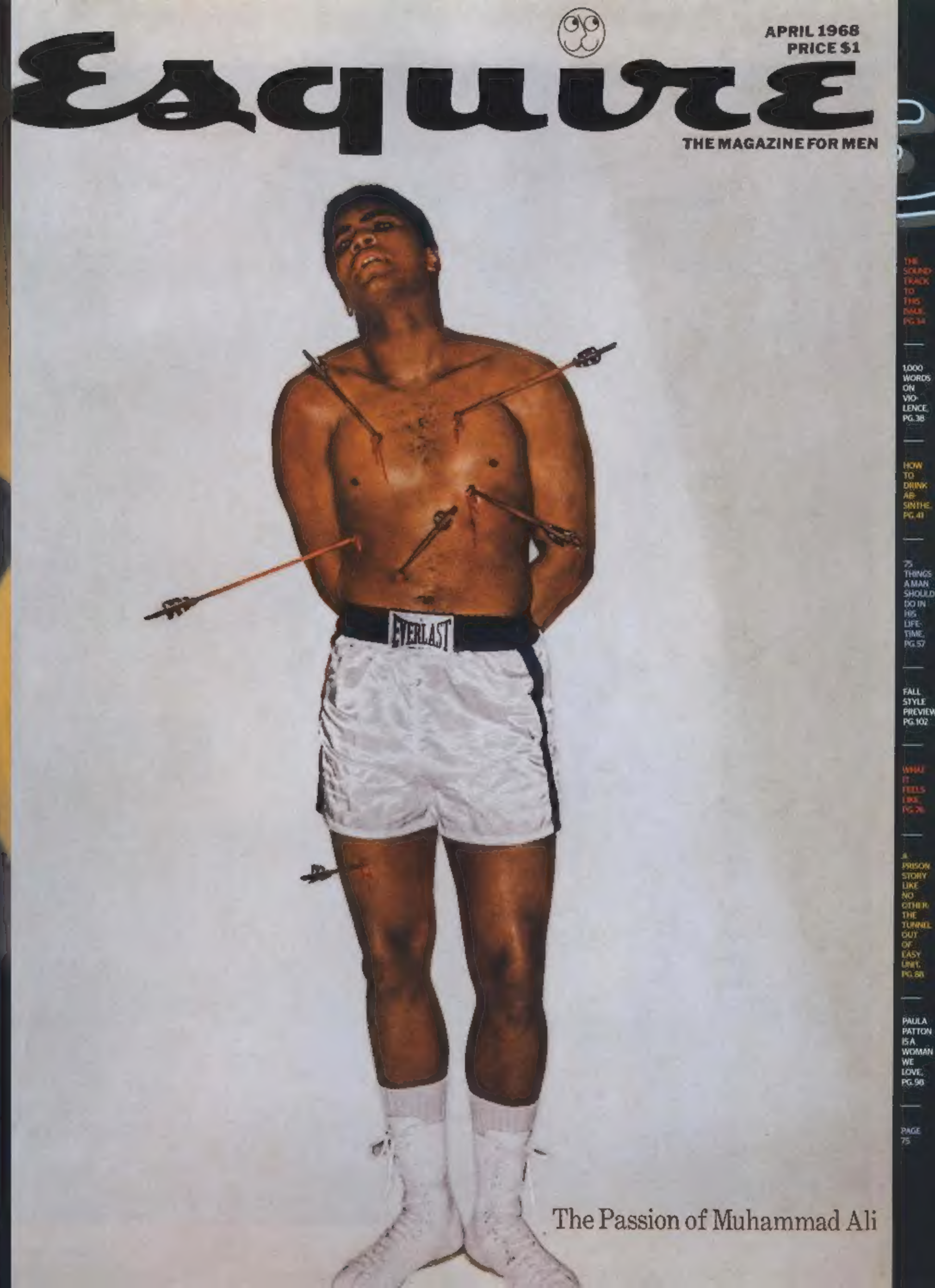
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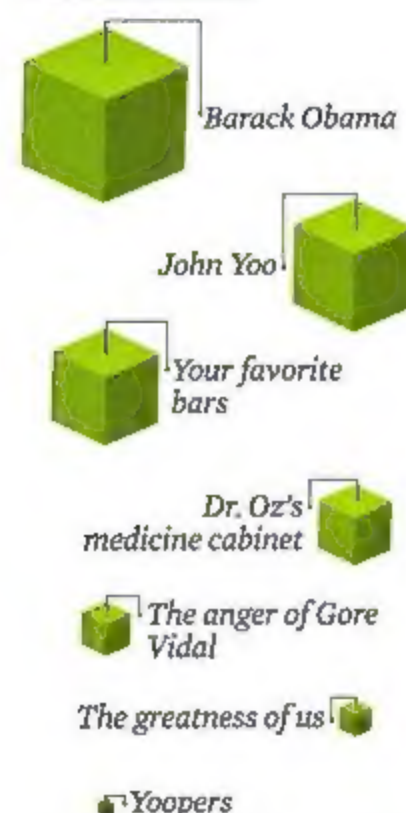
This Way In

THIS MONTH IN THIS WAY IN: *Esquire* blogs! (page 14); how to wear jewelry if you're a man (page 20); how to divorce your husband if you're a Pueblo Indian woman (page 14); epistolary reporting (page 18); and a letter from Stephen Baldwin (not that one) (page 14).



June was America month, apparently: a guy who hopes to be president of America, the man who defined torture for America, the state of bigotry in America, and a bunch of great bars throughout America.

WHAT YOU WROTE ABOUT:



ONLY TWO MORE FEATURES AND HE'LL BE TIED WITH MCCAIN

In the June issue, contributing editor Charles P. Pierce examined Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama through a skeptical lens ("The Cynic and Senator Obama"), questioning the value of the senator's promise to restore America without addressing our responsibility for its failings.

Pierce's article on Barack Obama and our collective need to pay for our national sins is an example of why your magazine endures after seventy-five years: amazing writing that informs, questions, and, ultimately, inspires. When *Esquire* celebrates its 100th anniversary, I predict that his concluding paragraph, which I must confess made me choke with emotion, will be featured as among the best writing of your first century.

CHARLES JOYCE
Drexel Hill, Pa.

What an insightful look at the state of politics and patriotism in today's America. Pierce's assessment is dead-on. Every world power that preceded us has fallen—crushed, ultimately, by the weight of its own arrogance and widespread apathy among the citizenry. But Americans can't handle the truth about our nation. Honesty is deemed unpatriotic, and truth is punished by a dip in the polls.

TY COOPER
Arlington, Va.

Like many people, I like to bathe safe in my cynicism. I



understand that hope is an uncomfortable idea for people like me. We don't want to put energy into something just to have it disappoint us. But Obama is giving us a chance to stand up, dry off, and move on. So throw me that towel, Barack. This bath water is getting cold.

GREG CARLSON
Columbia, Mo.

When I received the June *Esquire*, I groaned to see the topic of your cover story, assuming it was yet another fawning article on Senator Obama. Instead I found one of the most insightful, well-written pieces I've seen dur-

ing a campaign season in which simply repeating the words *change* and *hope* passes as a thoughtful proposal. I'm glad to know I'm not the only cynic who just can't buy what the senator is trying to sell.

NANCY WOODWARD
Etters, Pa.

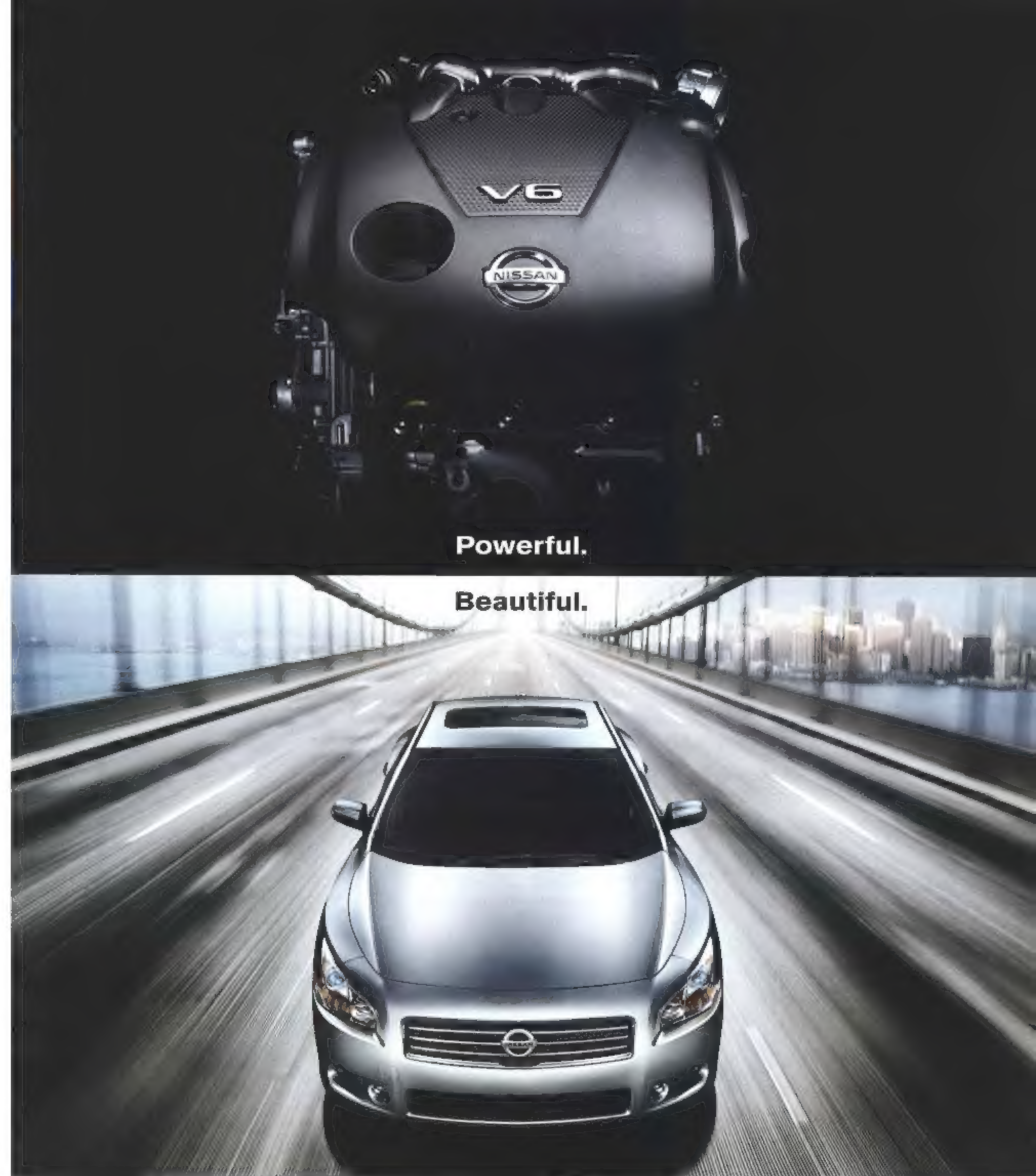
THE MAN BEHIND THE MEMO

Also in June, writer at large John H. Richardson profiled John Yoo, author of the controversial 2001 memo providing the U.S. with a new legal definition of torture ("Is This Man a Monster?").

I have a tremendous amount of respect for the difficult position Yoo was in: only two months on the *job*,¹ when 9/11

CONTEXT-FREE HIGHLIGHT FROM A LETTER WE WON'T BE RUNNING "Vote on your cell phone for how good my butt looks in these pants."

(1) According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2006 5.3 percent of all employed people in the United States held more than one job. One of them was the lead guitarist of a group that could be considered the best band with the worst timing in rock. To find out who—and why—turn to page 34.



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CONTEXT-FREE HIGHLIGHT FROM A LETTER WE WON'T BE RUNNING

"Move away from medical care and closer to the church."



happens and this task lands in his lap. Whether you agree with him or not, he obviously put a lot of thought and care into the infamous memo. People argue about what constitutes torture in a more nuanced and subtle way than before Yoo's memo, but there will never be a **black-and-white** answer when talking about something as subjective as pain. The easy answer's the extreme position. The difficult answer is what Mr. Yoo was asked to come up with.

TODD MUMFORD
Los Angeles, Calif.

Americans have no concept of the violence acceptable in the cultures of potential terrorists. Let our professionals work within the cultural norms of these societies overseas to prevent

them from arriving here. Then count yourselves lucky you live in the country you do.

SIMONE ROSA
San Clemente, Calif.

Richardson's article, while compelling, misses the most glaring contradiction in Yoo's memo. Yoo justifies the administration's torture policy by way of the president's war powers while at the same time arguing that the laws of war do not apply. This fundamental contradiction lays bare the bias in Yoo's thinking: He'll use any excuse necessary to justify executive action but lay aside those same excuses whenever they become inconvenient. This lack of accountability offends me both as a practicing lawyer and as a human being.

SPENCER DAVIS
Washington, D.C.

To permit Yoo's stupidity to stand as policy is like asking a shoemaker to define quantum physics. His life story is one of privilege and opportunity. When he was asked to define such an enormously controversial matter, he saw only another opportunity for advancement. Fact is, people continue to **suffer pain**,³ anguish, and torture because Yoo wanted to please his master.

JOHNNY KUESTER
Spartanburg, S.C.

WE ALWAYS THOUGHT OLD PEOPLE WERE ALLOWED TO BE GRUMPY

Prolific and strongly opinionated eighty-two-year-old writer Gore Vidal shared his views on the stupidity of patriotism, the misplaced pride of John McCain, and how there's no one left worth writing for (*What I've Learned*, June).

It seems like the creativity in Gore Vidal's work hasn't carried over into his perspective on life. I've seen grumpy, foul old men so many times; it pisses me off to see such an overachieving writer follow suit. Is this what I have to

[continued on page 18]

TEN THINGS LUKE SIMONS DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN

I already knew Kim Cattrall's Ten Things You Don't Know About Women (June). Please have her offer another ten.

LUKE SIMONS
Fayetteville, Ark.

Cattrall was too busy to offer an addendum. Lucky for you, our intern Nicole Tourtelot was not.
—Editors

1. Women have faster blood flow to the brain than men.
2. Women suffer less hearing loss than men.
3. The longer a woman's legs, the less likely she is to develop Alzheimer's.
4. A Pueblo Indian woman divorces her husband by putting his moccasins outside the front door.
5. Wearing high heels can make women better in bed by strengthening their pelvic muscles.
6. Women can tell by looking at a man's face whether or not he likes babies.
7. The scent of a breast-feeding woman can make other women horny.
8. Women are three times more likely than men to attempt suicide but four times less likely to succeed.
9. When they do try, at least if they're Japanese, often they wait until noon.
10. Women are more likely than men to hate the color orange.

Nicole Tourtelot appears in no movies or TV series. But she did spend some time immersed in obscure research.

SOMETHING TO DO AT ESQUIRE.COM



READ OUR BLOGS. In case this Internet thing actually catches on, we've decided to hedge our bets. So like Markos Moulitsas and every eleven-year-old with a Mac-

Book, we've started blogging. Here's what we have so far.

The Blog of Lists. Nothing but lists: our own originals along with the best of the Web, supplemented when necessary or amusing.

The Books Blog. Profiles of current authors, book reviews, and original works of fiction. Almost enough to keep you from reading actual books.

And coming soon: Fat Dad. Esquire writer at large Scott Raab weighs more than 300 pounds. He has an eight-year-old son. And he's usually very angry.

(2) A boring color combination for suits. For help choosing the right colors for your shirt, shoes, and tie, see page 49. (3) To read about painful experiences like running 135 miles in one day, getting hit by a car, and kicking yourself in the head to impress women, see page 76.

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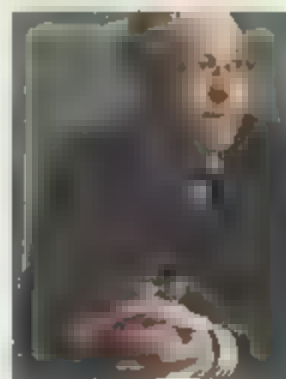
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Men and Murder



A FEW EDITOR'S LETTERS AGO, on the first anniversary of the April 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, I asked us all to take a moment to recall that loss. Thirty-two lives ended for no reason at all. I went on to lament the inability, or unwillingness, of our culture—and the cowardice of our presidential candidates—to address the phenomenon of young men committing mass murder on a regular basis.

In the course of that letter, I referred to Steven Kazmierczak—the young man who killed five people at Northern Illinois University in February—as a “sweet grad student.” That was a description consistent with every account of the incident I’d read. As I should have known, he was far more complicated than that.

Writer David Vann—who wrote about his planned attempt to circumnavigate the globe

in a sailboat of his own construction last year—has spent the last couple of months delving into the life of Kazmierczak. He has spoken with friends, fellow students, professors, mentors, lovers. He has obtained the official police reports, military records, and Kazmierczak’s medical and psychological history. Vann has entered Kazmierczak’s life to an unprecedented degree and then exited it to give us the most thorough portrait of a modern mass murderer imaginable. As you read it, you’ll alternate between despair and hope as the progression of his life does the same. At times it seems as though Steve’s fate is sealed; in other periods, he shows remarkable potential. The story doesn’t offer cures or all the answers, but it does one extraordinary thing: It begins to answer the one question we have to ask before we get to why. Who?

DAVID GRANGER

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Early photos of Joseph Hoffman, who nearly dug his way out of a Michigan prison. Read how on page 88.

READER ARTICLE

In honor of the eighth annual *What It Feels Like* collection (page 76), reader Dustin Mullinix offered this submission.

► **What It Feels Like...**

... To Run into a Clothesline

► BY DUSTIN MULLINIX, 36

ONE NIGHT when I was sixteen, my friends and I were throwing tomatoes at cars. When one stopped, we ran off through the neighborhood. Something nailed me in the mouth—it felt like a punch—and the next thing I knew I was flat on my back. For a second I felt no pain. Then burning. It felt like the upper right side of my mouth had been ripped out. I ran to my grandparents’ house. They couldn’t understand a word I was saying. We used a bucket to catch all the blood. The cord had ripped out three teeth, exposing my jawbone and a bunch of nerves. I kept touching them with my tongue. Each time it felt like an electrical current shooting from my mouth to the tips of my toes. We dragged my dentist out of bed for emergency surgery. To this day, I chew almost exclusively on the left side of my mouth. And anything cold really hurts.

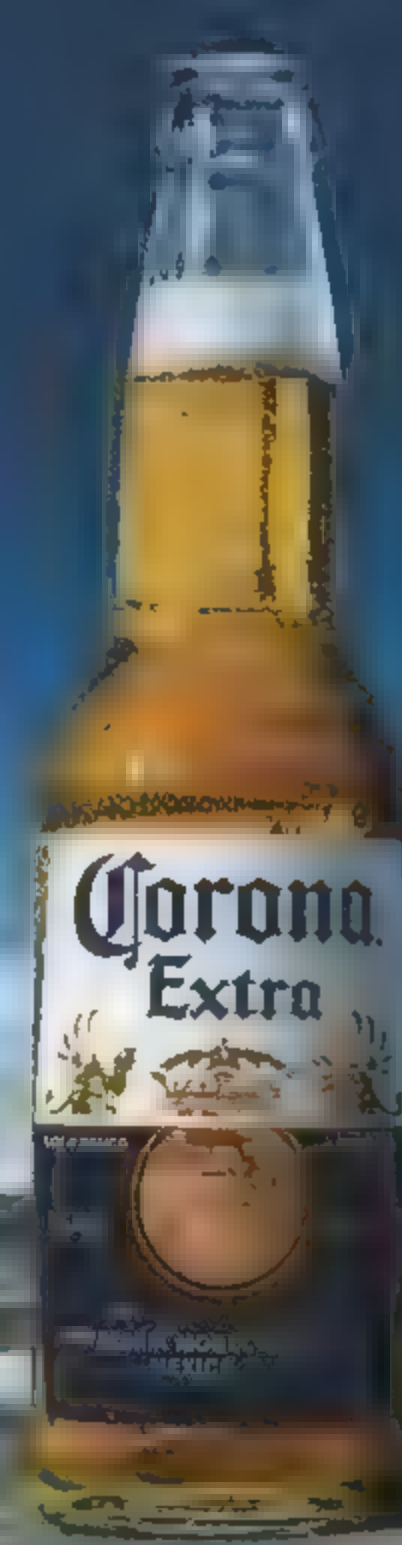
And because this year’s coverage includes dual perspectives of the same event.

... To Be Run Into

► BY THE CLOTHESLINE, 23

I DIDN’T even see him coming.

Love Triangle



[continued from page 14]

look forward to if I aspire to become an iconoclastic writer?

STEPHEN BALDWIN
Toronto, Ont.

Wow. No one loves Gore Vidal more than Gore Vidal does.

JAKE BERRY
Maple Valley, Wash.

ONE WOMAN WE PLEASSED AND ONE WE OFFENDED

The June issue included our third collection of the nation's greatest bars ("Esquire's Best Bars in America 2008").

Thanks for your endorsement of drinking alone. I'd like to offer a brief addendum. If you read, stick to literature, not the newspaper and not pulp from the airport. You want to be reading something you can sink into, not

CONTEXT-FREE HIGHLIGHT FROM A LETTER WE WON'T BE RUNNING

Maybe her clitoris is in the wrong place

turning pages to see if there's anything else more worth your time. Also, match your drink to your book: Dashiell Hammett, rye, Raymond Chandler, gin gimlets; Roddy Doyle, stout. And if you need to be told what to drink while reading Ian Fleming, you probably shouldn't be reading in the first place.

ELENA O'CURRY
Chicago, Ill.

My June issue arrived on the doorstep, I stepped inside the house to news about the presidential primaries in North Carolina and Indiana; I poured myself a martini in order to have an open mind about your cover boy and—

damn! You say you'd drink with Hillary, but "not Obama—the guy has a job to do"? Please. Like Hillary doesn't have a job to do? I've subscribed for ten years and given you to every man I've dated, because I thought you understood me. But this is a low blow. Sheesh.

LISA ALVA
Los Angeles, Calif.

AND TWO GUYS WE SWEAR WE'VE NEVER MET BEFORE

I always think the next issue of Esquire can't possibly eclipse the previous. And each month I am forced to reconsider. Thank you for publishing what is perhaps the most important, well-written,

Esquire

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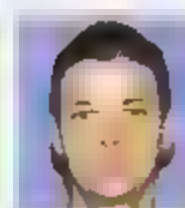
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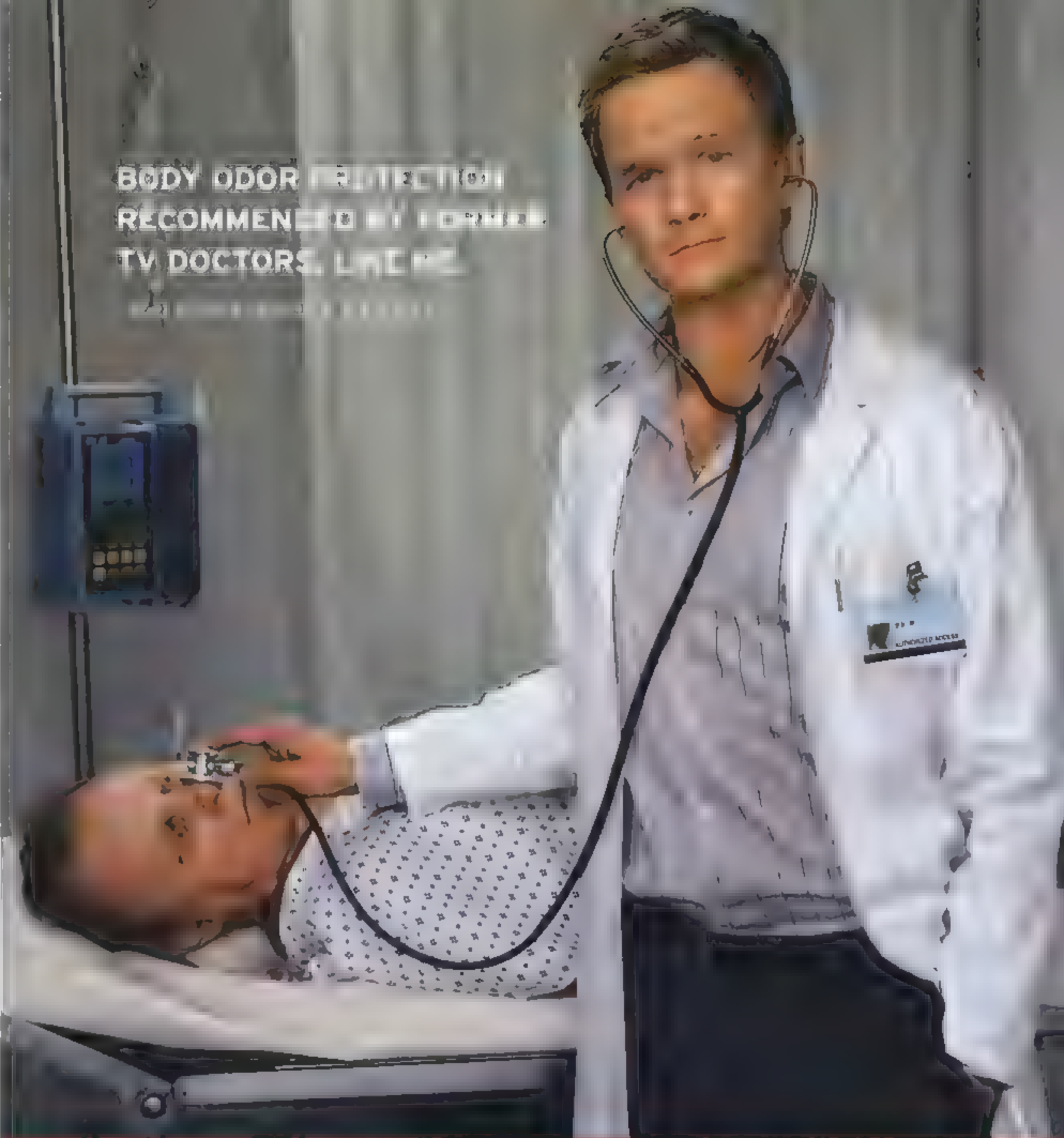


WHEN GRAD student Steve Kazmierczak (left) killed five students and himself at Northern Illinois University this past February, it immediately

struck writer David Vann, who's been pondering the causes of suicide ever since his own father killed himself twenty-eight years ago. Vann's initial approach to the piece was personal—he wanted to find out what triggered such a mysterious breakdown. Yet what he found after spending two months meeting with Kazmierczak's friends and reviewing his medical and police records was that Kazmierczak didn't snap. He'd just learned to hide his troubled past and present extremely well—even from those who knew him best. "Portrait of the School Shooter as a Young Man" begins on page 114.

ON PAGE 88, contributing editor Brian Mockenhaupt tells the story of Joseph Hoffman and Timothy Murphy, who dug a forty-foot tunnel out of jail in 2007 ("The Tunnel"). But getting that story wasn't easy. After the attempted escape, the men were placed in solitary confinement. Which meant no phone calls and restricted visitation, especially from journalists. But letters? Letters were okay. So back and forth they wrote. Twenty-six letters, hundreds of pages. It took months of patience and produced a fascinating story of ingenuity and determination. Also, plenty of hand cramps. A selection of the letters are online at esquire.com/tunnel-letters.

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CONTEXT-FREE HIGHLIGHT FROM A LETTER WE WON'T BE RUNNING

Mr. Ed scared my housekeeper clean out of her wits.

and meaningful magazine in the country. Consider me a lifelong reader

BRIAN BUCKINGHAM
Raleigh, N.C.

After reading the June Esquire, I now know why other magazines are so full of crap: All the good writers work for you.

ROBERT JACOB
Miami, Fla.

ELSEWHERE IN THE BIN

"Night Stand" by Daniel Woodrell (June) is the best fiction I've read in a periodical in a long time. At once grotesque, humane, and haunting, it's going to take at least another read to digest. Please, more fiction like this: with balls.

JEDIDIAH AYRES
St. Louis, Mo.

I found "The New Bigotry: A Primer" (June) to be very interesting and informative, but I have one correction. The lead illustration shows the Michigan American Robin spouting the sup-

posed slur "Yooper." Yooper is actually an endearing term for those inhabiting Michigan's beautiful Upper Peninsula. Maybe you were thinking of the derisive term for those Michiganders who live in the Lower Peninsula below the Mackinac Bridge that separates the two regions? We Yoopers refer to them as the Trolls.

BOB KELIAS
Fredericksburg, Va.

I recently left my wife for her boss and moved a thousand miles away with her to New York. Thank you for preparing me.

IAN SCHWANDT
Rhinebeck, N.Y.
You're welcome. Cool if we call your wife?
—Editors

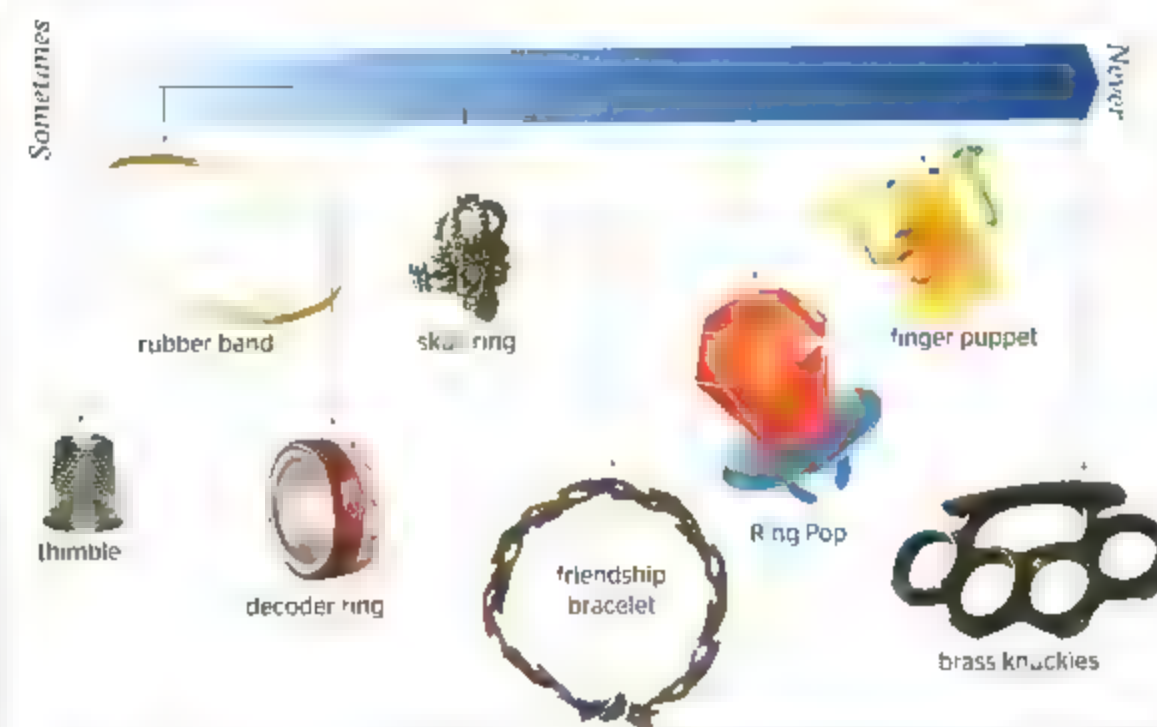
Letters to the editor may be mailed to The Sound and the Fury, P.O. Box 1704, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. Also, Esquire encourages the use of e-mail (to esquire@hearst.com or via the Web at esquire.com/talk) and fax (212-649-4305). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. For subscription questions, please go to service.esquire.com.

THE OVERADORNED HAND

I need your advice regarding men's jewelry. It seems like most items are fine on their own, but when mixed with others, discretion is key. Right now I wear a watch, a bracelet, and a wedding band. But I really want a pinkie ring. Are two rings too much?

KEITH PENN
Fort Myers, Fla.

The general rule is one ring, one watch, one bracelet (four if you're a sixth-grade girl). If you're bold, add a ring to your other hand. If you're really bold, consult the guide below. —Editors



14) What Robert Downey Jr. must have to play a character in blackface. Also, talent. See why you shouldn't be offended on page 28.

Style Agenda

ESQUIRE READERS

TAKE AN ACURA ON THE TOWN ON THE HOUSE

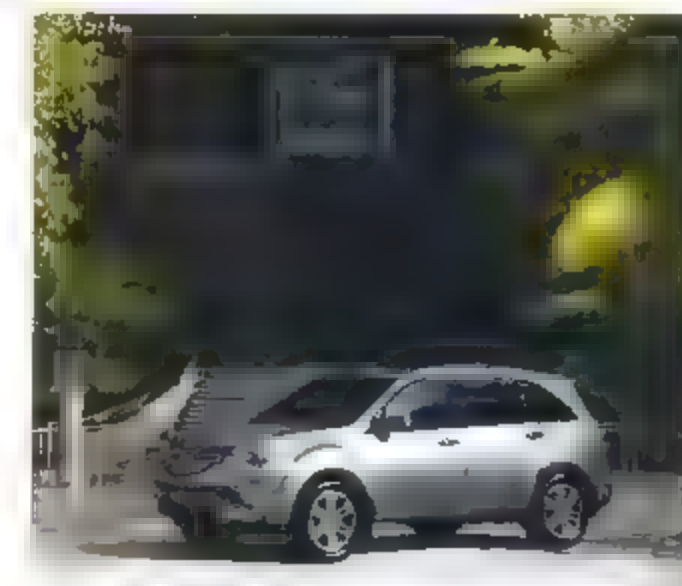
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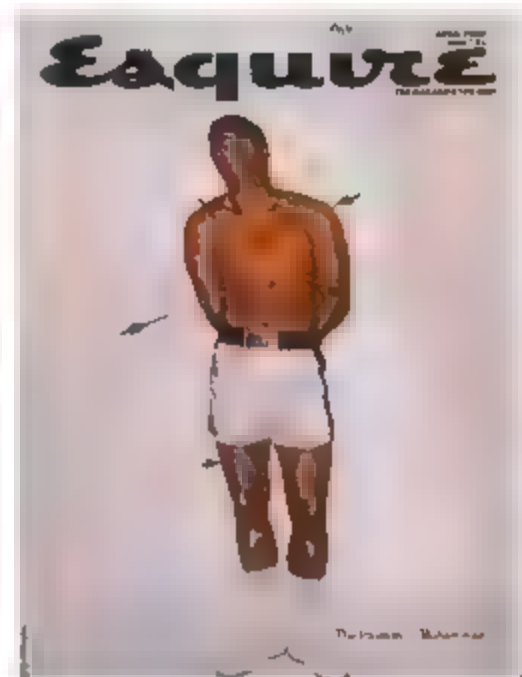
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CELEBRATING 75 YEARS, PART III



The third iconic cover we chose to re-create for our seventy-fifth anniversary was itself a re-creation. Based on Francesco Botticelli's fifteenth-century painting of the Christian martyr Saint Sebastian, the April 1968 cover depicted a persecuted Muhammad Ali, who had been stripped of his heavyweight title after refusing to serve in the Vietnam War. Now we turn to another great martyr, Stephen Colbert. He's dealt with having one of the most popular shows on TV. More horrible than that, he's a white man. And he's been one his entire life. To hear him tell it, that's the worst kind of martyrdom there is.

A Conversation¹ with Stephen Colbert

His photo shoot took more than nine hours and involved twenty people, some women's makeup, and one container of Jiffy Pop. We asked him all about it over e-mail.

ESQUIRE: Were you familiar with the Ali cover² before this?

STEPHEN COLBERT: Yes.

ESQ: Were you familiar with Saint Sebastian³ before this?

SC: Even more so.

ESQ: Did you go through any special preparation for this?

SC: I yelled at myself in the mirror until I cried.

ESQ: What about breaks? Did we at least give you a robe?⁴

SC: I got naked and rolled around.

ESQ: What was the best part of being photographed?⁵

SC: The Body Bling⁶ they rubbed on my legs. I've developed a chemical dependency to it.

ESQ: How'd it work with the arrows?

SC: They shot them at me. I dodged.⁷

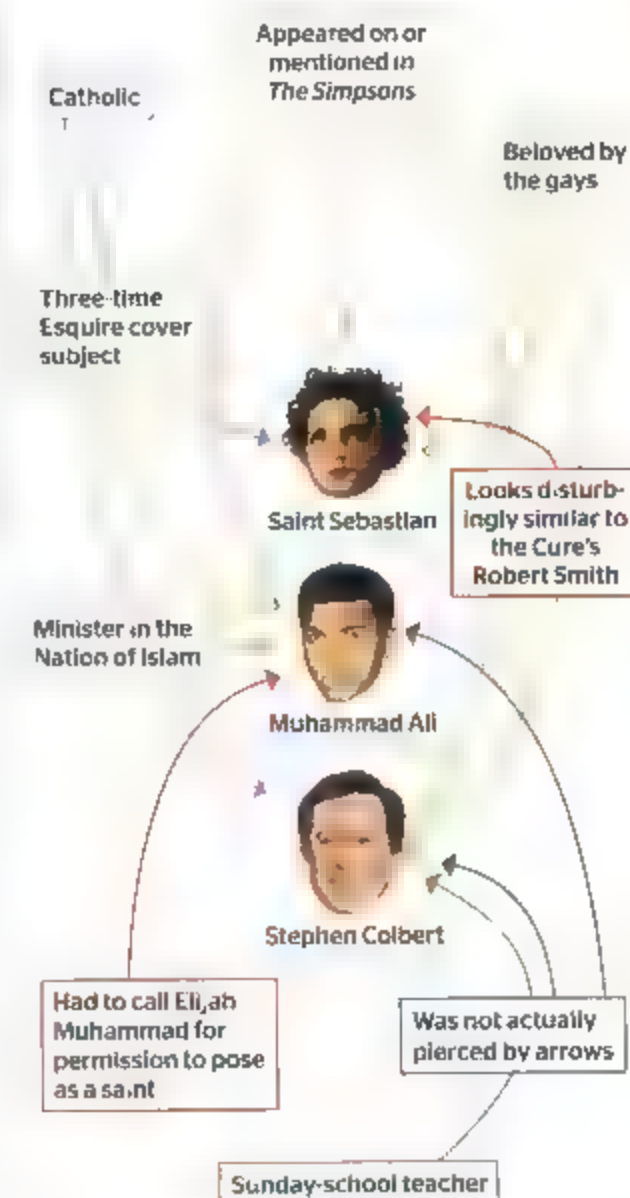
ESQ: You look a lot less affected by the arrows than Ali or Saint Sebastian. What does this say about you?

SC: Either I'm tougher than Ali, holier than Sebastian, or too stupid to feel pain. Like a flatworm.

ESQ: If you were going to be martyred now, how would you want it to happen?

SC: Massaged to death.

THE THREE MARTYRS: A COMPARISON



¹Heavily annotated.

²Shot by Carl Fischer, who also photographed Virna Lisi shaving for the cover of the March 1965 issue, which we re-created in May.

³The patron saint of archers, athletes, and soldiers—and the person to pray to if

you're scared of getting the plague. Was martyred by Emperor Diocletian in 288.

⁴No.

⁵By Art Streiber, who shot two other Esquire covers: Dave Chappelle in May 2006 and George Clooney in December 2006.

⁶A bronzing cream for women, also used by Jennifer Lopez.

⁷Unlike Fischer's shoot with Ali, which used arrows hung by string, one arrow was held to Colbert's chest by a belt. Another was held to his thigh by an assistant. The rest were digitally added.

"Colbert had so many great ideas we didn't execute—I could have just kept photographing him." —ART STREIBER, PHOTOGRAPHER

Man at His Best

1. THE CULTURE» Robert Downey Jr. in blackface, the Hold Steady.
2. THE INSTRUCTIONS» Absinthe, New Orleans, sex. And GPS!
3. STYLE» What a little color can do for a man. Not blackface.

THE VOCABULARY (Terms and Ideas you will encounter in the pages that follow. Great for conversation.)

• **EXTRARACIAL** *adj.*: Marked by an innate coolness that mutes an expected discussion of race. As exemplified by Barack Obama, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Lando Calrissian, and Robert Downey Jr. (SEE PAGE 28.)

• **purification through violence** *n.*: A CATHARSIS CAUSED BY CONFLICT AND PAIN, AS SEEN IN CORMAC MCCARTHY NOVELS, GRAND THEFT AUTO IV, AND YOUR CHILDHOOD. (SEE PAGE 38.)

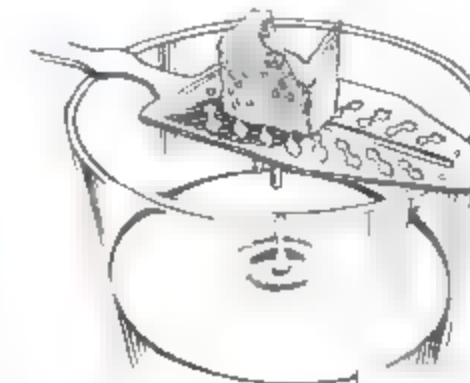


FIG 2

• **WETTING THE SUGAR** *n.*: 1. An exotic cocktail preparation whereby something is melted, dissolved, set on fire, juggled, etc. 2. A euphemistic expression for any kind of exotic preparation a man might undertake. (SEE PAGE 41.)

• **LIQUORS OF MYSTERY** *n.*: Alcoholic beverages that one has heard of, is intrigued by, but is not quite sure what to do with, such as absinthe, mescal, grappa, Armagnac, "malt." (SEE PAGE 41.)

• **physical abnormality** *n.*: A MOMENT OF FRISKINESS IN AN OTHERWISE SEXUALLY STAGNANT RELATIONSHIP, FACILITATED BY THE EFFECTS OF OXYTOCIN (DEFINED BELOW). (SEE PAGE 46.)

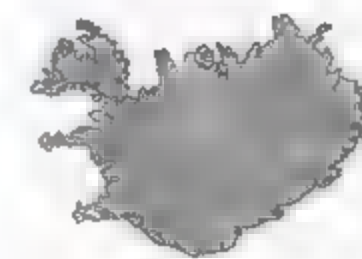


FIG 3

• **ICELANDIC** *adj.*: Accessible but nuanced. Northern but vibrant. Cold but green. Fun but intellectual. Bjork but normal. (SEE PAGE 34.)

• **OXYTOCIN** *n.*: A hormone released during intimate physical contact, such as when you kiss your beautiful wife or when she hugs your good-looking friend. (SEE PAGE 46.)

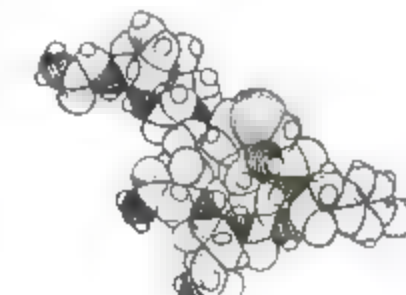


FIG 4

• **SUPPORTING VOCALIST** *n.*: A music fan who publicly and energetically expresses his faith in, love for, and allegiance to a band, indiscriminately encouraging others to listen as well. Common among enthusiasts who are no longer concerned with "image" or being "cool." (SEE PAGE 34.)

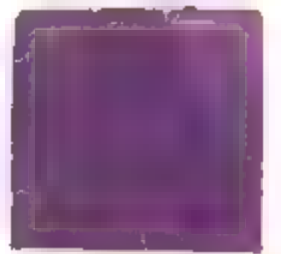


"You'll have as much fun with the trolls as with the blonds." (ANITA BRIEM, PAGE 36)

(ANITA BRIEM, PAGE 36)

"These things go down easy. If you overdo it, all bets are off." (DAVID WONDRIK, PAGE 41)

(DAVID WONDRIK, PAGE 41)



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■■■

FIG 1

• **PURPLE** *n.*: A color with a fluctuating but ever-present position within the Hierarchy of Tricky Hues for Men. It's currently in first place but being challenged by orange. (SEE PAGE 49.)

CONTEXT-FREE PIECES OF ADVICE IN THIS SECTION:

• YOU WOULDN'T GO WRONG IN CHECKING OUT THE FOLLOWING AMERICAN TEEN, THE ROCKER GENERATION WILL. BOY A PINEAPPLE EXPRESS (PG 31)

• UPGRADE YOUR GPS SYSTEM (PG 43)

• NEW RESTAURANTS IN NEW ORLEANS. YES NEW BARS IN NEW ORLEANS NO (PG 42)

• LIGHT PURPLE YES DARK PURPLE NO (PG 49)



In some places, the drinks stir you.

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Film

The Only Guy Who Could Pull It Off

Robert Downey Jr.'s minstrel show in *Tropic Thunder*

By Stephen Garrett

Robert Downey Jr.'s chocolate complexion, kinky short hair and "hot damn" cadence in the Vietnam satire *Tropic Thunder* is blond kin to the shoe polish-stained cheeks, Brillo pad pompadours, and declarative "vessum massa!" of yore. Honky is still playing Negro. But once the



lights dim, it's hard to tell what's more shocking: that Robert Downey Jr. is in blackface or that after about two minutes, you stop thinking about it.

Hollywood hasn't manufactured this kind of wide-release minstrelsy since that nice Jewish boy Gene Wilder delivered his hilariously inept and subversive strut with Richard Pryor in *Silver Streak* in 1976. (Unless you count the times African-Americans wore it themselves, like Spike Lee's black blackface diatribe against nappy-headed racism in 2000's *Bamboozled*, or the Wayans brothers' creepy paleface cross-dressing in 2004's *White Chicks*.) Time was, blackface was as common as Uncle Tom servants and Jim Crow laws. Even the transition from silent film to talkies wore its racism as a badge of honor: With 1927's *The Jazz Singer* best known for Al Jolson's ebony visage belting out "My Mammy." The most lively white stars in Hollywood's firmament—including Judy Garland and Bing Crosby—were only too happy to rub on that inky greasepaint and shake their jazz hands while smiling with those big painted lips.

And once you were bedecked in bigotry, there were two options: ham it up like Stepin Fetchit (*Amos 'n' Andy*'s white creators Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, for example) or just wear the outfit but act the way you always do (Al, Bing, and Judy).

Downey mixes both, playing up stereotypes by declaring his love of crawfish and collard greens, but pulling back enough so it's not a shrill caricature. (Helping him to balance that act is black stand-up comic Brandon T. Jackson as a rapper-turned actor who keeps busting Downey's chops about the mahogany charade, which gives him even more license to black it up.)

How does Downey pull it off? Singular talent. The Oscar-nominated actor has spent his career perfecting humor and pathos in equal measure. Which means that when, in *Tropic Thunder*, he plays a dead-serious Australian Method actor who insists on taking a role originally written for a black man, what ends up parodied is the self-seriousness of Method acting and the Vietnam-movie trope of the chitlins-chewing Negro grunt. Blackface

From left, Jolson, *The Jazz Singer*; Crosby, *Holiday Inn*; Mickey Rooney, *Babes on Broadway*; Wilder, *Silver Streak*; Savion Glover, *Bamboozled*; the Wayans brothers, *White Chicks*.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

How a bored Indian king got Pierce Brosnan to sing and dance

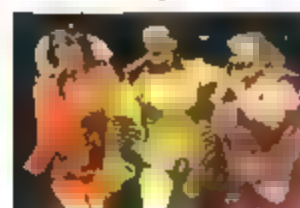
According to legend, in sixth-century India, King Shihram commands that a game be invented to alleviate his boredom. So a Brahman named Sissa creates *chaturanga*.



By the end of the 15th century, *chaturanga* has developed into modern-day chess.

Chess increases in popularity, which leads to the development of the annual World Chess Championship in 1886.

A chess championship is used as the basis of a love story in *Chess: The Musical*, which debuts in London in 1986 with music by former ABBA singers Björn Ulvæus and Benny Andersson.



Judy Craymer, who met Björn and Benny while working on *Chess: The Musical*, helps develop a musical based on ABBA songs, *Mamma Mia!*

After a successful seven-year run on Broadway, *Mamma Mia!* is adapted for the screen.

On July 17, *Mamma Mia!* premieres in theaters, starring Meryl Streep and Pierce Brosnan.

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MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS

(Film)

It isn't the subject, it's the vessel.

And it doesn't hurt that he's in a damned funny film. Writer-director Ben Stiller uses the conceit of three self-centered actors making a Vietnam drama in Southeast Asia as his starting point for moviemaking mockery. And *Tropic Thunder* (August 15) is relentlessly, mercilessly, brutally hilarious.

Still, what major movie star wants to risk offending anyone—especially a star who just

DOWNEY HAS
SPENT HIS LIFE
PERFECTING
HUMOR AND
PATHOS IN
EQUAL MEASURE

rocketed into the blockbuster-franchise stratosphere with *Iron Man*? "If Downey thinks something is going to be offensive, it's going to tempt him to do it," says James Toback, who has directed three movies starring Downey, including *Black and White*, in which he cast the actor as a bisexual documentarian who makes a pass at an unsuspecting Mike Tyson (and almost gets pummeled).

Downey may be fearless, but he's also shrewd enough to know the difference between being racist and telling a joke about racism. In *Tropic Thunder*, minstrelsy is a curiosity, not a flash point—precisely because the man in black is so cool.

THE RULES

Rule No. 111: If on your journey you encounter a museum dedicated to a reptile, a country singer, or a seasonal vegetable stop in. *Rule No. 171: If a man must refer to his own ass, it's best to go with "keister."* *Rule No. 198: Trinidad: yes. Tobago: maybe.*

The Hall of Cultural Significance

The six most intriguing performances this month

ACHIEVEMENT
IN
ADOLESCENCE



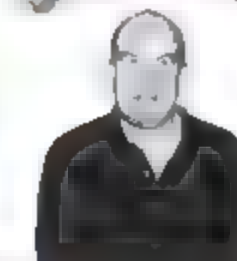
The high school subjects of the documentary *American Teen*. The scariest thing about Hollywood's high school stereotypes is that the classifications are spot-on. *American Teen* follows five students from Warsaw, Indiana, as they navigate the uncertain terrain of prom planning, college applications, and general cruelty. Expect flashbacks.

WHITE GUY
OF THE
MONTH



Rainn Wilson in *The Rocker*, the story of Robert "Fish" Fishman, a has-been drummer who joins his nephew's high school band. Wilson plays the delusional obsessive, like Dwight Schrute in spandex. Even if it's not a chance to showcase his range, Wilson pulls off some memorable gags, like puncturing his bandmates' van with drumsticks.

GUY BEHIND
THE CURTAIN



David Simon, writer and producer of HBO's miniseries *Generation Kill*. Finally, a treat for those who've been lamenting the end of *The Wire*. *Kill* revolves around marines in Iraq at the onset of the invasion, and it should thrill Simon fans, who think that touring the smartest man writing for television makes them the smartest people watching television.

BRITISH
DISCOVERY
OF THE
MONTH



Andrew Garfield in *Boy A*, a film about a young adult reintroduced to society after being incarcerated for a childhood crime. It's 2008's first "who the heck is this guy?" moment. In a year, America will be pretending England didn't beat us to the punch on this one—like we did with *The Office*, *Idol*, and the word *brilliant*.

ACTRESS
WHOSE NAME
WE JUST
MEMORIZED



Hayley Atwell, star of *Brideshead Revisited*. The original miniseries didn't have anyone resembling Atwell, who extends her impressive streak of being the best part of every film she makes (including Woody Allen's *Cassandra's Dream*), and who sets an improbable precedent by making 1930s swimwear sexy.

BRILLIANT
PERFORMANCE
BY AN
INANIMATE
OBJECT



The pineapple express in *Pineapple Express*. David Gordon Green's new comedy is what *Harold & Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* wished it could have been: a hilarious movie about stoners that isn't only for stoners. Credit is also due to James Franco, who gives the best red-rimmed performance since Cheech. —DAVID WALTERS

THE COMPLAINT: 3-D

STUDIOS PERSIST in resuscitating this technique, decade after decade, as if all they need to do to dazzle us is figure out a way to make the glasses look less stupid. But there's a good reason why 3-D hasn't caught on, and it has something to do with the fact that the planet Earth is not a giant grade-school diorama. When we see an ordinary two-dimensional image, our brains automatically compensate. We understand perspective. All any 3-D process does is make every foreground object look prominent, creating a virtual astigmatism. And the whole arrow-in-your-face, Bono-in-your-lap effect, while initially startling, ultimately just makes me worry that the movie might follow me home. —MIKE D'ANGELO



(Books)

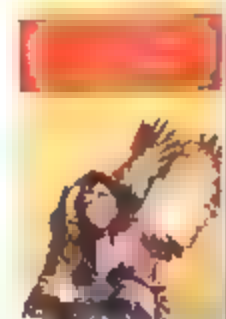
The Crash Course

In September, Philip Roth will publish *Indignation*, his latest novel about Ohio, Newark, sex, war, and guilt. Always guilt. You have a month to prepare.



THE DEVILS YOU LIVE FOR The children in Chris Adrian's *A Better Angel* (FSG, \$22) are surrounded by flickering angels, inhabited by legions of ghosts, overtaken by viruses, handicaps, compulsions. Sometimes they speak to the devil. Sometimes he speaks through them. While all this might sound like the synopsis of a bottom rack DVD, Adrian's children are never mere ciphers for pain. They are simply kids, believable and true, imbued with wonder, hungry for cereal and a little television.

And while these nine stories—one of which first appeared in the December 2007 issue of *Esquire*—are all chilling, they never leer, or twist at the ligature of cheap sympathy. The sufferings of children are probably a damned good augury for our problems as a culture. Adrian, himself a pediatrician and seminary student, is a lucid, brilliant fortune-teller. He unveils our demons, who, in the wake of their visitations upon these children, reveal something you can only call the face of God.



TOM CHIARELLA

(Books)

ARCHETYPES OF THE MODERN The Extremely Debauched Intellectual

WHAT'S ALWAYS BEEN best about British novelist Hanif Kureishi's work is that he's less interested in making his characters good and more concerned with making them interesting.

The narrator of his latest, *Something to Tell You* (Scribner, \$25), is Jamal, a hyperliterate, half Pakistani London-based cat. He's a psychoanalyst with an interesting sister, kinky tastes in the bedroom, and best friends who operate on the shady side of the street. Here's a guy who can talk, and talk well. He's also a guy who knows where to score the best weed.

This is a book about well-educated middle-aged adults dealing with lust, desire, and regret. But it isn't the kind of hyperliterate book in which people just sit around talking. Kureishi, who made his bones writing movies like *My Beautiful Laundrette*, knows things need to happen. So it's the kind of book in which people do seriously bad things—murder, incest, copious sex—and then sit around talking about it. The work owes as much of a debt to Pedro Almodovar as it does to Oscar Wilde.

Yet melodrama aside, the best thing about *Something to Tell You* is that it reminds readers that there used to be a place for intelligent conversation. The anecdotes are brief and well sculpted. The jokes, subtle and sad. Kureishi's conversational writing sounds just like somebody talking—until you stop and realize that it's so much smarter than any talk you've overheard lately.

BENJAMIN ALSUP

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(Music)

Holding Very Steady

A couple months ago I had drinks with Tad Kubler, the lead guitarist for the Hold Steady. Kubler told me that in addition to his side gig as a photographer (tadkubler.com), he sometimes does jury-selection consulting. These facts surprised me, and they made Kubler seem both more ordinary and more interesting than I expected. But they also raised a depressing question: Does the man behind the music of the greatest straight-up rock band of the 21st century really have to moonlight?

He does, or at least he did until very recently. Despite an almost embarrassing outpouring of critical love, the Hold Steady has sold just 122,000 copies of its three albums since releasing its debut, *Almost Killed Me*, in 2004. Even by the compromised standards of today's music industry, that's paltry. (Arcade Fire, another critical favorite, also released its debut LP that year, and has now sold 776,000 copies of its two albums.) Granted, modern rock bands make most of their money from touring, and the Hold Steady tours

constantly. But Kubler (top, second from right), frontman Craig Finn (top, center), and their three bandmates have gotta be praying that *Stay Positive*, their just-released fourth album, will do some real business.

That's probably not gonna happen, even though *Stay Positive* is an excellent record. Finn's still spitting tight, bleak, funny stories about Twin Cities trash bins, and Kubler's still framing these tales inside well-crafted power songs that usually feel a lot happier than Finn's endings. *Stay Positive* will probably eclipse 2006's *Boys and Girls in America*, which sold 76,000 copies—respectable, but far from Arcade Fire territory. To add insult to injury, Arcade Fire is exactly the kind of arty act whose fans abandon them as soon as they have the nerve to succeed, whereas the typical Hold Steady fan would be delighted to see his favorite band get huge.

I'd love to see *Stay Positive* defy my theory that the Hold Steady is the best band with the worst timing in rock. At the very least, here's to hoping this record makes being in the Hold Steady a full-time job. —BRENDAN VAUGHAN



THE ANGRY GERMAN

Multiculturalism
(This article is best read aloud in a German accent.)

I PLAY SOCCER with a bunch of people, a friendly pickup game. One thing about this crew is that it is a very mixed group of all countries of this world. We even let a Frenchman play with us. We don't really take him seriously, of course, but we let him play. There's Englishmen with bad teeth and drunken Irishmen, Scots with their sheep, fat Americans, lazy Italians—every nation you can think of.

In the beginning when I made intemperate remarks about the English or the French, I would be reprimanded by my American girlfriend: "You can't say these things—it's insulting." But it actually isn't, at least not to people with a sense of humor. The countries of Europe have been at war with each other for thousands of years. I think it is much better to just tell the English to go brush their teeth than to shoot them.

Living here has taught me to walk on the eggshells of PC, but it's tough to adhere to these standards. You have to avoid saying "Chinese laundryman," even though the laundryman is, indeed, Chinese. I can't even make fun of the Swiss without being reprimanded. It seems the only group that is not off-limits is us Krauts. Even our own companies come up with utterly ridiculous commercials for American TV. But that's okay—have a go. You see, we are not humorous, after all.

The author is a German who has been living in the U.S. for about ten years. He is often angry.

SOUND-TRACK TO THIS ISSUE

Go back to the cover, begin music, start flipping. This story will cost you \$5.94.

BY ANDY LANGER

"One Finger Symphony," Stereolab
A taut sixties-style loop and French vocals. Play it at your next party. (This Way In)

"Hang On," Dr. Dog
Philly misfits offer a wickedly soulful meditation on fate. (This page)

"Jager Yoga," CSS
The São Paulo collective that brought "Music Is My Hot Sex" to your iPod delivers summer's booziest anthem. (Drink)

"Ten Dead Dogs," Wild Sweet Orange
What heartache really feels like: "I spoke in tongues and took all my clothes off / The tops of my fingers touched the tops of my toes." (What It Feels Like)

"Jesus Is a Good Name to Moan," Mugison
The Icelandic singer-songwriter unfurls a deep blues howl that confirms the orgasm section of "Whole Lotta Love" is the gift that keeps on giving. (What I've Learned)

"Mi Viejo," Ratatat
One very twisted spaghetti western. (This Way Out)

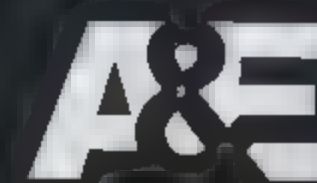
When your only hope is someone who's been there before.



BENJAMIN BRATT

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Funny* Joke from a Beautiful Woman

As told by
ANITA BRIEM

TWOSNOWMEN are standing in a field. One says to the other, "Funny, I smell carrots, too."

ABOUT THE JOKESTER: Iceland. Big island up north, not as cold as it sounds. Land of Vikings, glaciers, Björk, and Anita Briem. The 26-year-old actress plays an Icelandic mountain guide in the reincarnation of the Jules Verne classic *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. It's in 3-D, which means Brendan Fraser's overwhelming heroics are tempered with warm, angelic apparitions of Briem. "It's an honor to be filmed in three dimensions," she says. "I wear skintight mountain-climbing trousers. Glad I was in decent shape." Briem claims the movie is an opportunity to spread the word about the spirit of the Icelandic woman. So, Iceland. "You have to experience it for yourself. You have as much fun with the trolls and the eaves as you will with the beautiful blonds." Reader service: Round-trip flights from JFK airport to Reykjavik's Keflavik International start around \$995. And we hear the CenterHotel Thingholt is nice.

BUDDY KITE

Esquire cannot guarantee that this joke will be funny to everyone.



TOPICS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

! Hanif Kureishi novels and David Gordon Green comedies make you want to a) just say no, or b) start buying higher quality pots. —Al Jolson. Does Anita Briem really believe in trolls and eaves, or is Icelandic humor very subtle?





(A Thousand Words About Our Culture, by Stephen Marche)

Are Things Getting a Little Violent?

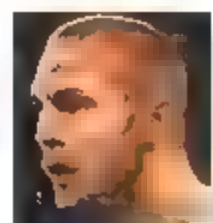
How big is Cormac McCarthy Pulitzer and the Oscars—he's vation society is trying to glect. That's the ultimate the place where he learned to read and jerk off and stare out the window at strangers considered too valuable to let decay. His ascent from cult writer to Great American Novelist™ isn't his fault—it's not like his books have suddenly spiked in quality; they were always brilliant. No, his worldview has achieved maximum currency all on its own. From "The Orchard Keeper" to "The Road," McCarthy's theme has remained the same: Men share an innate violence that can be contained for a while but eventually spirals out of control into mayhem. Everyone seems to get his point these days.

E.g.: One of the fastest-growing sports in the Ultimate Fighting, which began in 1993 with the motto "No Rules!" and has added only a few since ("no throat "no attacking an opponent on or during the break," ing to the kidney with the heel"). The first time years ago, a man caved in another man's cheek with his knee; the eye was just hanging there; it didn't look much like a sport. But lack of restraint is the point, much more vital to UFC's appeal than any display of skill or athleticism. All the other, more conventional sports have been compromised by cheating—match-fixing in soccer, drugs in baseball, blood doping in cycling, espionage in football, and on and on. We crave a true contest. With no rules comes no cheating. The result is a spectacle of purifying violence.

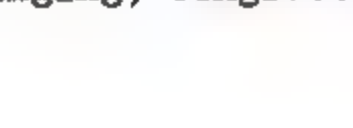
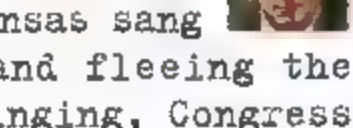
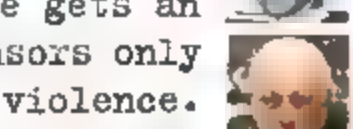
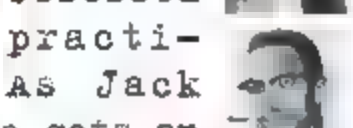
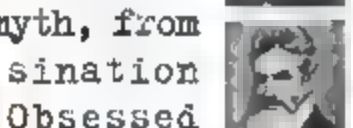
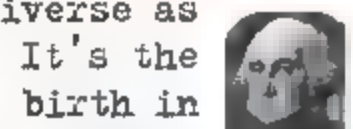
Purification through violence has always been one of America's central political mythologies, created and nurtured by figures as diverse as George Washington, John Brown, Malcolm X, and Dick Cheney. It's the necessary inheritance, perhaps, of a revolutionary nation's birth in blood. American art follows the basic tenets of the myth, from "Moby-Dick" to Charles Guiteau's assassination ballad to "The Godfather" to Snoop Dogg. with violence and terrified of sex: That's practically the definition of American culture.

Nicholson reportedly said, "If you suck on a tit, the movie gets an R rating. If you hack it off with an ax, it will be PG." Censors only grow upset when they don't understand the background to the violence.

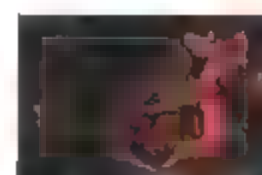
Nobody complained when Johnny Cash from Arkansas sang about snorting coke, killing his woman, and fleeing the law, but when Dr. Dre from Compton starts singing, Congress holds hearings.



World is "There Are strikes," "no kick-I watched,



With the fourth installment of Grand Theft Auto, the series has finally achieved cultural normalcy—at least none of the usual hypocrites has started whining yet. The game is a perfect expression of violence without restraint, a magnificent mechanism for involving



the viewer in a completely enrapturing simulation while doing away with all boundaries. You don't have to kill the hookers in GTA, but if you don't kill hookers, you're not going to play the game for long. The first, or possibly the second, ques-

tion players entering the game will ask themselves is, Can I hit the jumbo jets with the rocket launcher? The answer is no, you can't, but you can go into the game's version of the Met with the rocket launcher and blow up the dinosaur exhibits; the bones careen off the walls; it's hilarious. Whereas UFC creates a savage spectacle, Grand Theft Auto IV turns violence into a big laugh. The experience of losing yourself in GTA is "potus et exlex," being lost to yourself and outside the law, a description of comedy that goes back to the poet Horace in the first century B.C. Grand Theft Auto is comedy purified: a safe alternate world in which to break the law as profoundly and as often as you like. It's the up-to-the-minute form of a primordial joy, a kind of digital Valhalla. Kill with nobody dying. Steal with nobody losing. Repeat for eternity.

I hear my mother asking, "Why must our paradises be so violent?" Cormac McCarthy has an answer. From "Blood Meridian," McCarthy's masterpiece: "War was always here. Before man was, war waited for him.... That is the way it was and will be. That way and not some other way." We can choose to sublimate violence through sports or confront it through fiction or turn it into comedy through video games. Violence remains. Always.

This kind of mayhem may be ancient—it may even be permanent in the human condition—but it's new to America. With September 11, Americans' basic political myth of liberation and purification through violence shattered. That day was an encounter with violence not in the hinterland, as in the Mexican War or the

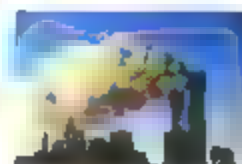


Wild West, not a liberating violence, as in the Revolution or the Civil War, but blind, pointless, utter mayhem. The war in Iraq, so often compared to World War II or Vietnam, depending on who's doing the comparing, has no accurate precedent in American experience. It has been a long, horrific lesson that the mayhem is within us as well as beyond us. Americans torturing

innocents at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay. Terrorists training children as young as nine to be suicide bombers. And for what? The mayhem is foundationless and cornucopian. There's no bottom to it, and there's no top to it. Art and sport are just trying to keep up.

Any success can only ever be partial. The modern Olympics, under way this month in Beijing, might at first appear to be the opposite in every way to Ultimate Fighting, an idealistic way to contain or at least mollify our inner demons. In the ancient Olympics, the most honored sport was the "pankration," a form of all-in wrestling not so different from the mixed martial arts of the UFC—except that it was done nude, and competitors sometimes died rather than surrender. The Greeks paused all war for the duration of the games, but they also understood that violence can only be bracketed, and only briefly.

The same people who invented tragedy knew that even within sacred and peaceful circles where war never intrudes, we need to see a fight. ■





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DRINK
THE
FLAW

I suppose I should have been a little more careful. I walked down your town. I walked down a couple of twenties, and I walked with a girl and I took Pernod on the lake. That or some thing very much like it, happened last year when two brands of absinthe—the French Lucid and the Swiss Kubler, were approved for sale in the U. S. We're talking real, honest-to-Satan absinthe, not some lame-ass substitute. Now, the great green elixir of darkness—basically high-proof neutral spirits flavored with wormwood, anise, and pungent herbs—has been illegal in the U. S. since 1912, and that hasn't changed.

So what gives? It's a matter of chemistry. The government never banned absinthe itself but rather thujone, the wormwood-derived compound that supposedly gives the stuff its mind-bending edge. However, modern chemical analysis shows that thujone survives distilling in quantities so small they are actually legal. This is something of a double-edged sword. That same analysis also shows that the old brands that spawned absinthe's dark legend didn't have all that much thujone, either—all along it was just really strong herb-flavored booze. Plus, half the excitement of absinthe was the fact that it was contraband. Now

MINOR CATASTROPHE NO. 24

YOU DON'T KNOW FROM ABSINTHE

Consultant: Esquire's drinks correspondent David Wandrich



{1}
Pour 1 to 1½ oz absinthe into a glass. Place absinthe spoon over the glass. Place sugar cube on the spoon. Slowly trickle 4 to 6 oz water through sugar cube into glass.



{2}
After absinthe louches up (gets cloudy), dump sugar into glass. Use the absinthe spoon to break up sugar and dissolve it.



{3}
Drink. Slower.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE M. KENDRY

» DRINK

anyone can get it. Well, okay. Glamour is a big part of why we drink what we drink. But so is taste, and a good absinthe has that in spades—provided you handle it right. It's designed, you see, as a sort of cocktail concentrate: hence the strong herbal notes and the high proof (traditionally, between 120 and 140). So you don't want to drink this stuff in shots. But mixed with a lot of cold water and a little sugar, it makes for a refreshing drink with a complex, herbal fragrance (think mountain meadow). One or two and there's no way you'll cut your ear off. But these things go down easy, and if you overdo it, all bets are off. Below, and on the previous page, a few of our favorite new bottles.



1. Versinthe (\$55) The only one of these in which the anise dominates, and at 90, the lowest in proof, this is nevertheless a good training-wheels absinthe.

2. Mansinthe (\$65) Marilyn Manson not only has impeccable taste in women, he's a fine judge of absinthe, too—as this, made in Switzerland to his taste, demonstrates.

3. St. George Absinthe Verte (\$75) A nontraditional blend of herbs makes this the only domestic absinthe on our list, something of an acqui red taste. Worth checking out, anyway.

4. Top pick: Vieux Pontardier (\$65) An absolutely classic French absinthe. As good as it gets.

Previous page: Pernod Absinthe (\$65) Pernod was the leading brand of absinthe before the ban. Now it's back, and it's clean, balanced, and tasty.



» FOOD

THE NEW IN NEW ORLEANS

By John Mariani

Brennan's is back. So is Arnaud's and Galatoire's. You can still get the signature oysters Rockefeller at Antoine's. There's the jazz brunch at Commander's Palace, and the beignets and chicory coffee are steaming hot at the Café du Monde. I've been back to New Orleans three times since Katrina hit, and I have eaten as well as ever, not just at the classic places but at admirable new places that have dared to open.

The young husband-and-wife team of chefs Slade Rushing and Allison Vines-Rushing has brought modern cuisine to the menu at MiLa (817 Common Street; 504-412-2580; \$90*), in the Renaissance Pere Marquette Hotel downtown, with dishes like pan-roasted sweetbreads with black truffles, grits, and sherry bacon jus.

Uptown at Bistro Daisy (5831 Magazine Street; 504-899-6987; \$90), chef-owner Anton Schulte stuffs ravioli with crawfish and mascarpone, and sauces them with wilted leeks, roasted tomato, and a brandied herb cream.

John Besh reopened his posh August but has also given his beloved city the new Luke (333

St. Charles Avenue; 504-378-2840; \$70). Have the charcuterie, and move on to the crab-and-corn bisque and a succulent pan-fried redfish with runny poached eggs, sweet crabmeat, and a bearnaise sauce (only available on the brunch menu). The setting looks appealingly old—a mix of French bistro wood and tiles (with a big raw bar up front) and a New Orleans saloon. The waitresses are sassy, and the wine is served in carafes or by the bottle, with no wine over \$80.

The best of the new restaurants is Cochon (930 Tchoupitoulas Street; 504-588-2123; \$75), a terrific boucherie-style restaurant owned by Donald Link and Stephen Stryjewski, who turn out platters of house-made boudin and hot andouille sausage, plump fried alligator-tail morsels spiked with a chili and garlic aioli, and that lustrous cochon pork slowly cooked with a crisp skin and mouth-melting sweetmeat. The wooden booths are a little stiff, but a shot of Catdaddy Original Carolina Moonshine will make them more comfortable.

**Prices based on dinner for two, before drinks, tax, and tip.*

» DRINK

And a Few Well-Soaked Words About the Old

GOING BY A COUPLE of hours spent sipping Sazeracs at Tujague's, Napoleon House, Arnaud's, or any one of the other great old French Quarter oases—about as pleasant a thing as any clothed adult can do—you'd never know there was a Katrina. But then again, neither would you know there was a 21st-century New Orleans bars are very conservative places, in the best sense of the word. Proprietors won't change things just to make them new and shiny. And if they find something that works for them, they stick to it, come hell or high water—or, in this case, both. All of this is by way of saying that unlike restaurants, there aren't a lot of new bars in the city. And the best of the ones there are, Café Adelaide in the Loews Hotel, already seems like it has been there forever. We consider that a healthy sign. —D.W.

>The Digital Man MAD DASH

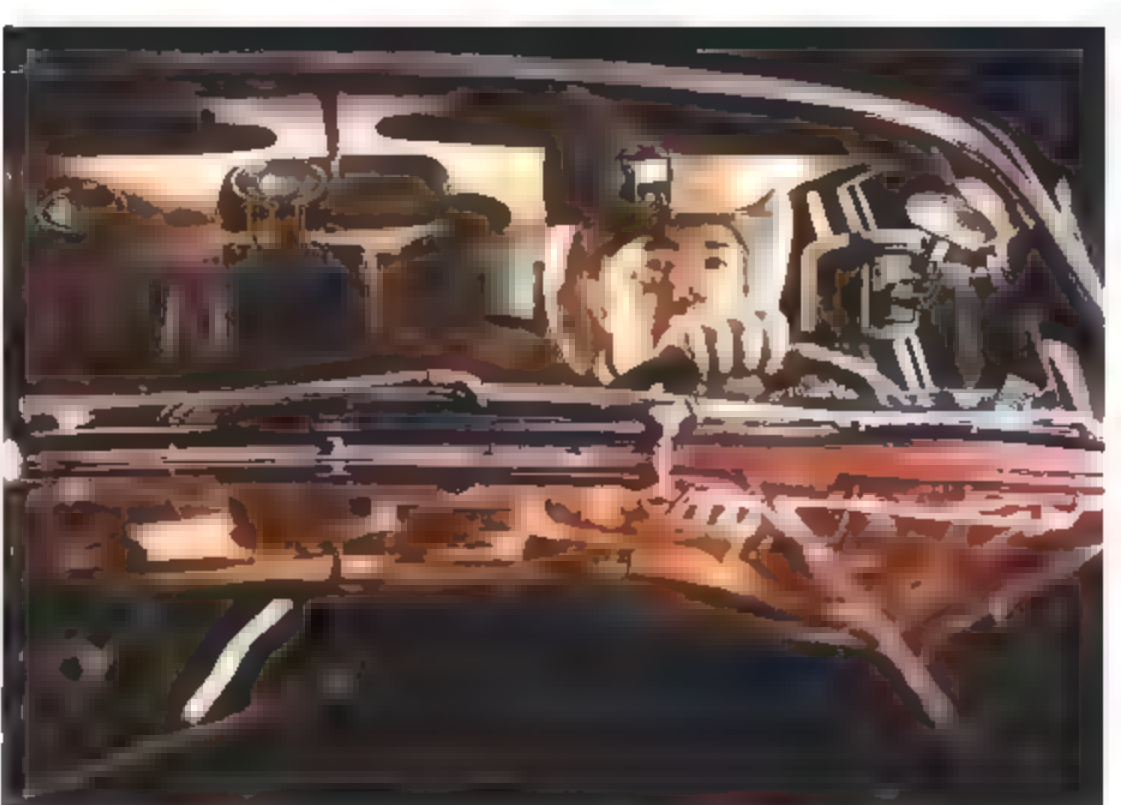
By Barry Sonnenfeld

Not GPS's. Didn't we just go through this?" "Only seems that way, Sweetie. And we never tested them in Los Angeles."

Yes, the car felt a little crowded with five electronic voices telling us which way to go (they often disagreed), but I loved hearing them pronounce *Cahuenga*, *Sepulveda*, and other West Coast boulevards. And I enjoyed watching the valets react as their eyes adjusted to five glowing devices glaring back at them from the windshield of our rented Prius. Sweetie explained their look was not one of respect, but I'm sure she was wrong.

Actually, there have been some real breakthroughs in portable GPS's over the last year, in spite of Sweetie's headshaking dismissal. Here are three of the best.

The brilliance of (a) the Dash Express (\$400; dash.net) is that it is always connected to a cellular network, which lets you e-mail addresses to the unit. In the morning, my assistant would send meeting locations to the Dash, which downloaded them as soon as I turned on the car. Using the same technology, all Dash units on the road are constantly transmitting their location and speed to some central computer, which then analyzes the info and sends real-time traffic data back to each Dash, color coding the roads. The more people buy the Dash, the more accurate the information will be. Sadly, the thing takes a surprisingly long time to find a GPS signal and is slow to recal-



culate when you reject a route you know is stupid. Plus, the map is purposely drab so the color-coded roads stand out. However, if your interest in GPS is mostly about traffic alerts during your daily commute, this is your device.

Sweetie and I traveled down to Laguna Niguel for the weekend, and the bitching and moaning of the human voice (Sweetie) on the trip down practically drowned out the five GPS voices, so I cheerfully offered to test only one on the way back. We tried (b) the voice-activated Garmin Nüvi 880 (\$1,000; garmin.com), my favorite of the three. The Garmin comes with a remote button that straps to your steering wheel and controls the voice-recognition system. You can input an address by speaking, and also ask it for the nearest gas station, bank, or Wolfgang Puck restaurant. The Nüvi uses an FM antenna to gather traffic information from MSN Direct, displaying alerts and offering detours. It also reads aloud SMS text messages from certain Bluetooth phones (not the BlackBerry).

The (c) TomTom GO 930 (\$500, tom.com) also lets you input information via voice recognition, though its voice interface is not as good as the Garmin's. The TomTom's most interesting feature is a sort of wiki traffic system—allowing users to tell TomTom central command when its maps or directions are wrong. You can change your map and share the information with others, and you can set your unit to accept changes others have made, specifying your level of trust from "anything anyone sends" to "information verified by TomTom." And unlike Sweetie, the unit responded to every voice command I made.

Barry Sonnenfeld directed Men in Black and is the executive producer of Pushing Daisies.

» AS IF WE WEREN'T DEPENDENT ENOUGH ON OUR BLACKBERRYS While I was testing the GPS units above, I had an additional device suction-cupped to the Prius's windshield: my AT&T BlackBerry 8820 with TeleNav. The \$10-a-month subscription service lets you type in your destination, or use voice recognition, to tell it where you want to go. The BlackBerry gives you turn-by-turn voice and visual directions, and is pretty great. —B.S.

MINOR CATASTROPHE NO. 526:

YOU'RE SEASICK

Consultant: Jay Buckley, Dartmouth Medical School professor and former astronaut



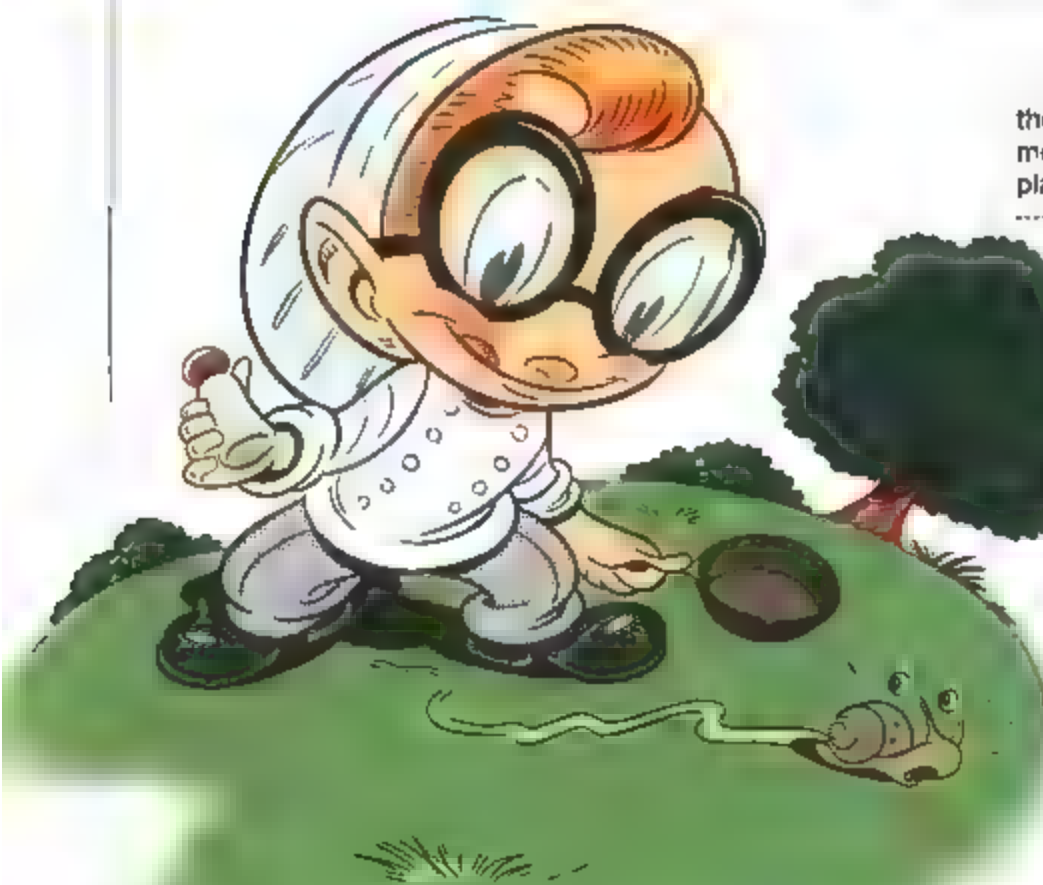
(1) Eat some ginger. It will help with nausea. But if you have to vomit, don't fight it. You'll feel better immediately.



(2) Pick a point on the horizon and concentrate on it for a few minutes while trying to keep your head as still as possible.



(3) If nothing else works, take the helm. Piloting takes your mind off your stomach by keeping it focused on something else. Like the fact that you've never piloted a boat before.



>Answer Fella

SNAILS, SNOWFALL, FLY EYES & ONE DUMB WAY TO DIE

ESQUIRE'S ANSWER FELLA believes that there are no stupid questions, just stupid people who don't ask questions, fearing they'll look stupid. So ask Answer Fella anything. If he doesn't know the answer, he'll find out who does or who has a guess that sounds right.

Is there a difference between regular snails and the snails eaten in France as escargot, or could I head out to the garden and toss the pesky critters into my frying pan?

Fella: That said—and far be it from AF to judge a fellow harshly simply for eating hermaphrodite, mucus-secreting vermin—fire up your oven. The common garden snail found here in the U.S.—*Helix aspersa*, the European brown snail—is among those served in gay Paree, and also in the typical uppity-goy American joint.

Note well, however, that you can't just snatch 'em up and scarf 'em down. Snail hunter and escargot chef Victor Yool says you must first "put them through at least a two-week purging cycle, because there's

no telling what they ate"—insecticide, for example, or a plant like foxglove, which is toxic to human beings, though not to the French. Yool maintains his snails in a plastic bin, feeds them cornmeal and water, and waits for them to poop out whatever they've ingested prior to their capture.

When they're good to go, Yool boils his snails for ten to fifteen minutes. "This forms an incredibly disgusting scum that you must keep cleaning off," he says. "When the scum is gone, you know the snails are okay." He then takes them from their shells, dices the meat finely, adds butter, olive oil, garlic, and parsley, restuffs the shells, and bakes "until they're bubbling—at most fifteen minutes. Or you can put them into puff pastry and avoid the shell altogether."

Yool recommends serving them with a white wine or a mellow red, and, of course, a plain brown vomit bag.

Can it snow on a beach? I know it wouldn't stick, but has snowflake ever met sand anywhere?

It can. It does, and—like Mrs. Fella's salmon loaf in AF's gullet—it occasionally sticks. According to Steve Yanchio, the chief of natural resources at Michigan's Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, "We've got 65 miles of Lake Michigan beach, and they do get very much buried in snow. Usually it starts around the first of November. Typically, I'd say by Thanksgiving we've got snow on the ground to stay for the season. Sometimes you get a sandwich effect—several layers of sand and snow through the course of the winter."

Brian Murray, a Popham Beach State Park ranger in Phippsburg, Maine, wishes to inform you that it happens there as well. "We get snow right down to the beach," he says. "But it doesn't last long on the sand, 'cause the sand holds so much warmth. Any sun at all, it melts it right off."

And Kevin Griffin, owner of the Cold Salt Surf Shop in Sitka, Alaska, says, "There's plenty of times when we're hiking out to a break in the snow, hiking back in the snow, and surfing in the snow the whole time—I can send you pictures if you want."

Answer Fella encouraged Mr. Griffin to send along his pictures, but they turned out to be nude shots of Mrs. Fella taken back in her salad days as a bunny at the Fairbanks Playboy Club.

Why does a fly that buzzes around the same spot for an hour bolt from the room as soon as I roll up a newspaper? Have flies really followed a Darwinian course to such a point that the survivors can recognize the sound of an impending fatal blow?

Not the sound, says Joe Conlon, technical adviser of the American Mosquito Control Association—and by the way, if you ever get a chance to attend its annual convention, be sure to wear long sleeves and, above

all, avoid the zapper—who tells AF, "It's not that they recognize someone's rolling up a paper and is about to make them see Elvis—they've got teeny-tiny hairs around their body, which are very sensitive to air currents. They can't hear, so it's the movement and the air currents created by rolling up the newspaper" that alert them.

John Byers, a professor of zoology at the University of Idaho, notes that flies' eyes are crucial to their survival. "If you look at a fly up close, its entire head is made up of two compound eyes, made up of thousands of individual eyes, each looking in a separate direction, which are very good at detecting motion."

As for Darwin's little theory, UC Davis entomology professor Jay Rosenheim explains that "flies, like any animal, live under a relatively constant threat—it's not that somebody's trying to whack them with a newspaper, but that all animals have to be vigilant all the time for things that want to have them for dinner."

Which is why the interns frequently hawk a loogie in AF's coffee on the walk back from Starbucks, and also why Victor Yool is covered with a thin layer of mucus.

At what distance does electrical current in water no longer pose a danger? If I were somehow able to drop a plugged-in toaster into the water at a beach, how far off would a person need to be in order to be safe?

The short answer, according to Ned Forrester, senior engineer at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on lovely Cape Cod, is, "Don't do that."

The longer answer involves things like "dipole faults," "milliamps," and "fibrillating," which is what the human muscle known as the "heart" does in response to electrical current. And if it does so long enough, you'll die of a heart attack.

"It's not 'undangerous' at any distance," says Forrester. "And it's not dangerous at every distance. There's a falloff in danger with increased distance. But quantifying that is hard."

And because Mr. Forrester was too kind to add it, Answer Fella will: you twit.

Got a question? Send it to Answer Fella via esquire.com/talk.

The luxury performance crossover
that defined the category
is now redefining it.

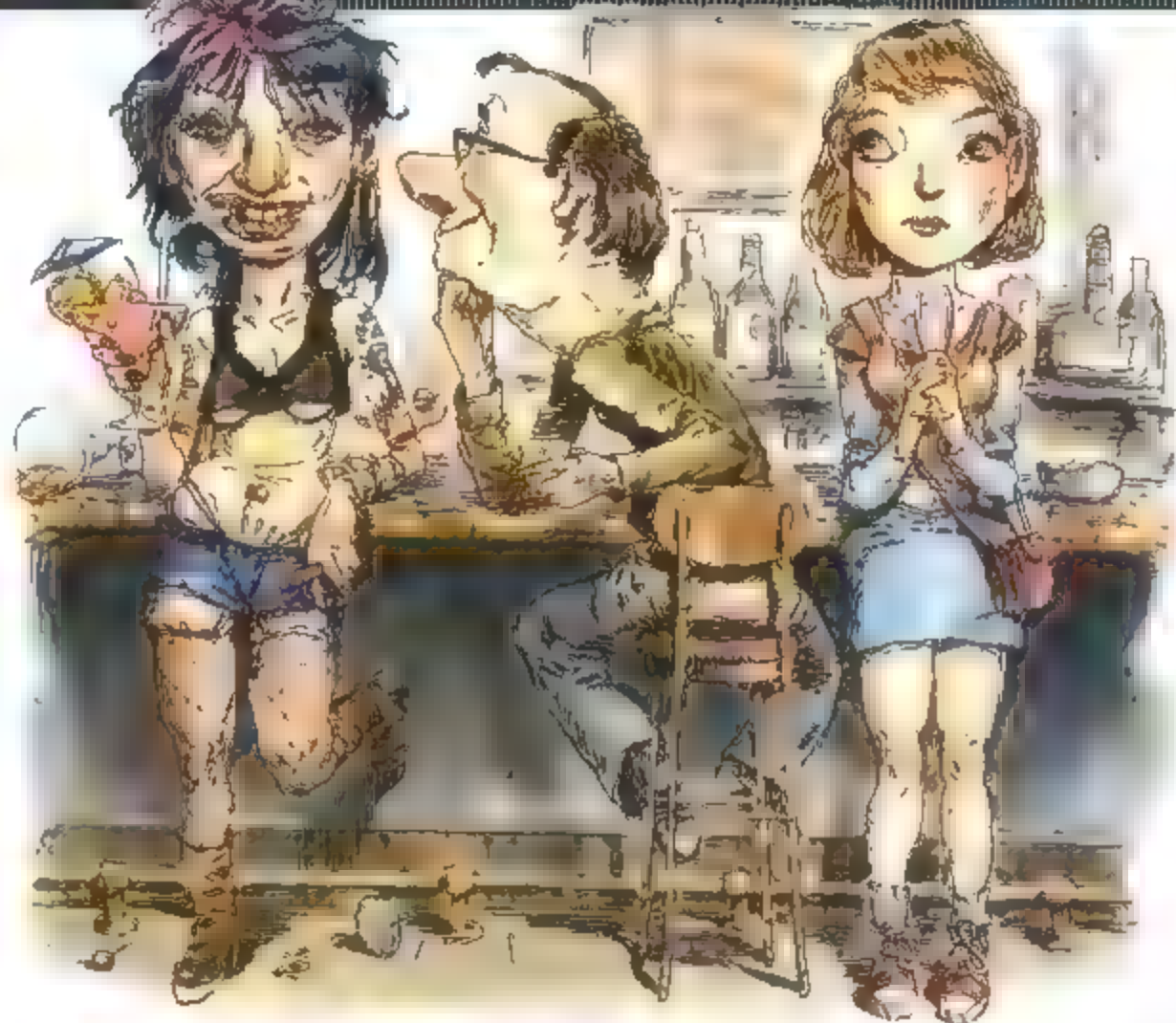
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INFINITI



Sex

By Stacey Grenrock Woods

Why am I attracted to the wrong women?

You're asking the wrong woman, but I suspect it's because the right women are too caught up in the demands of their environmental blogs or polygamous sects, or whatever it is they do, to pay you much attention. I'm probably wrong, so let's turn to a few relationship experts, or "relationshippers," for some help. "To put it in really simple terms," says psychologist Michelle Callahan, or "Dr. Michele," as she's called around the daytime-talk-show ghetto, "it's kind of like the difference between thinking with the big head or thinking with the little head." (I'm awaiting clarification on this puzzling statement, but neither Rachael Ray nor Tyra Banks is very good about returning texts.) Nonetheless, the

experts seem to agree that your sexual tastes form when you are just a wee lad, and the cure is "literally forcing" yourself to pursue a different type by first changing the settings in which you lurk for dates. An example: The better women don't hang around the methadone clinic; they get their dose and leave, as you should. And don't fret about the prospect of life with someone to whom you're not so attracted: Studies done in India have found that couples in arranged marriages report satisfaction levels equal to or higher than those in love marriages. So I'll go ahead and book your passage to Calcutta. Or you could just aim for the girl with the biggest breasts. You'll never regret it.

Does a couple's frequency of sex steadily diminish over the life of a relationship? Or are periods of increased activity common among couples? Like in their forties maybe. I hope.

Don't hope. If I learned anything at all from Jenna Bush's wedding, it's that hope is for losers. Somewhere around the three-year mark, couples become satiated with the lust phase of a relationship and, invariably, join bowling leagues. However David Schnarch of the Marriage & Family Health Center of Evergreen, Colorado, insists that his couples "commonly report having the best sex in their later years of life." Perhaps in Evergreen, but in the rest of the world, your best hope is to shake things up. "Any situation in which you get an overall body push of adrenaline and hormones helps generate sexual urge," says Pepper Schwartz, author of *Prime: Adventures and Advice on Sex, Love, and the Sensual Years*. "Often after an exciting or scary thing, people reassure them-

selves with sex." Also, many couples report more frequent and better sex after a spot of infidelity, so, while you locate a wife-swapping paintball group in your area, keep in mind what Helen Fisher, author of *Why We Love*, says: The frequency of sex early in a relationship is abnormally high. "Then you go down to what's normal." That's right, hopeless.

Why all the emotional investment in sex? Why aren't women programmed like we are?

Well, Professor Higgins, our brains have a larger emotional region than the male brain, which, meanwhile, has gone ahead and cultivated what's called a "sexual-pursuit center" that is not only 2 to 2.5 times larger than a woman's sexual-pursuit center but also has an Apple store, ample parking, and a trolley. This big center causes him (you) to seek out sexual pleasure and multiple partners first and foremost. Additionally, girl brains discharge far more oxytocin (a bonding hormone linked to estrogen and often found on stolen prescription pads), which is to blame for this silly attachment after sex, whether she wants it or not. "The circuitry is evolutionarily built," says Dr. Louann Brizendine, neuropsychiatrist and author of *The Female Brain*, "and it's been in place for millions of years." Biologically, the female brain won't risk impregnation by someone who won't be around to raise the offspring. Male brains release oxytocin, too, but just enough to usher out semen. It only hangs around for about four minutes, or until the woman does something like talk. "For women, the consequences of sex are much greater than for men," says David P. Barash, coauthor of *The Myth of Monogamy*. "It's just what your grandmother said." Speaking of whom, my grandma's got a big bottle of oxy. We could work something out. Bring cash.

Got a sex question of your own? Send it to us via esquire.com/talk.

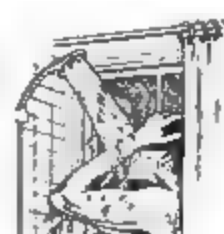
MINOR CATASTROPHE NO. 316:

IT'S TOO DAMN HOT

Consultant Brian Calvert, journalist, Cambodia



(1) Drink water to keep hydrated. Wear loose clothes that let the breeze evaporate sweat. Also, no underwear.



(2) Get up early and nap during the day, when it's hottest. Shower at night but don't towel off before going to bed. Wet sheets are cool sheets.



(3) Move at half speed. When bicycling, pedal so slowly you can barely stay upright. When walking, shuffle your feet. When typing, omit vowels.

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Performance you may never have thought possible from only two speakers this small.

The Bose Computer MusicMonitor™ was developed for the growing number of people who use their computers for personal entertainment, and want accurate sound reproduction from a small and elegant system. According to Rich Warren of the *News-Gazette*, "If you want a pair of exceptionally small speakers with incredibly big sound for any purpose, listen no further."

Our best two-piece computer sound system. Until now, the rich low tones necessary for high-quality desktop sound have come only from large speakers or three-piece systems with a bass module. The

MusicMonitor™ establishes for us a new threshold in the accuracy of music reproduction. As Arlen Schweiger of *Electronic House* reports, "The folks at Bose really know how to shrink a product while maintaining a big sound." It is the first time we have been able to produce sound quality like this with only two such small enclosures containing all the electronics and speakers.

Proprietary Bose technologies. The unexpected sound quality is made possible through a combination of unique Bose technologies, including our dual internal opposing passive radiators. This invention allows the

system to deliver faithful low note reproduction and musical accuracy, despite its small size. Dennis Barker says in *Digital TV DesignLine* that "after a listening test, I was quite impressed with this tiny pair of speakers."

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Listen risk free for 30 days. The best way to judge the performance of any sound system is in the unique acoustics of the environment where you'll use it. That's why we invite you to try the MusicMonitor™ risk free for 30 days. Order now and you'll even receive a free Carrying Case – a \$59 value. Ask about using your own major credit card to make 12 easy payments, with no interest charges from Bose.* Then listen, and discover why Bose is the most respected name in sound.



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What Has...

546
POINTY SHOES

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GERMAN SPORTS CARS

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MIDNIGHT-BLUE TUXEDOS

8
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HANGOVER REMEDIES

1
KAROLINA KURKOVA

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HAND-SEWN BUTTONS

121
NEAPOLITAN TAILORS

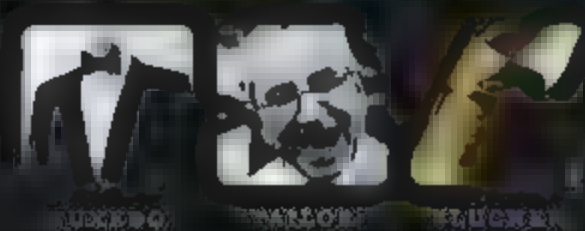
22
BOTTLES OF WHISKY

83
FASHION DESIGNERS

AND 85 ACCESSORIES TO
CATCH HER EYE

Esquire The Big Black Book 2008

THE STYLE MANUAL FOR SUCCESSFUL MEN
VOLUME III



SOME NUMBERS MAY BE OFF. YOU KNOW, LIVE OR TAKE IT.

AVAILABLE STARTING IN OCTOBER

Man at His Best Style 3



With a gray pinstripe: Never pair two patterns too close in scale; instead, put a fine suit stripe with a bolder shirt stripe. Or vice versa.

Suit (\$2,240) by Etro; shirt (\$195) by Dunhill; cuff links (\$165) by Pal Zileri; Freelancer watch (\$1,695) by Raymond Weil.

With a gray check: The bolder the check, the plainer the color and pattern of the shirt (e.g., a simple end-on-end in light blue).

Suit (\$773) by BR Monogram; shirt (\$250) by Ravazzolo; cuff links (\$375) by Tiffany & Co.; Speedmaster Professional watch (\$3,450) by Omega.

With a gray flannel: Punch up a dark gray with a bright shirt color or contrast the mottled fabric with a sharp stripe.

Suit (\$795) by Jack Victor; shirt (\$185) by Hickey Freeman; cuff links (\$345) by Cartier; Master Collection Maxi watch (\$2,400) by Longines.

THE SUGGESTION YOU COULD GET AWAY with wearing a white shirt every day, same as you could get away with only eating sandwiches or listening to the White Stripes for the rest of your life. You'd hate Meg's drumming after a while, but you could live with it. Or you could recognize that everyone could stand a little more color in his office wardrobe. But not too much. It's a surefire way to look put together without looking like a try-hard, and nobody likes a try-hard. Here's how to do color like a master, starting with a few variations on the gray suit.

THE YES AND NO OF SHIRT STRIPES ■ If the color of the shirt's stripe matches "yes," buy it; if it doesn't, don't.



THE OFFICE COLOR GUIDE

The Spring in Your Step

Three rich alternatives to your plain black oxfords

With a mid-blue solid: With a blue that's slightly lighter than navy, you can go a little bit lighter with the shade of your shoes. Here, the lighter tan has a deep patina in the seams that gives it gravitas.

Suit (\$495) by Perry Ellis; shoes (\$890) by A. Testoni; socks (\$9) by Nautica.

With a navy-blue windowpane: See the subtle, rust-colored pattern on the suit? And see how it complements the oxblood-ish leather? Yeah, we noticed that, too. So will other people.

Suit (\$1,995) by Pal Zileri; shoes (\$980) by Louis Vuitton; socks (\$18) by Brooks Brothers.

With a navy-blue pinstripe: Nothing says "trust me" like a bold pinstripe and rich chocolate-brown shoes (here given a twist with a patterned navy sock). Except maybe a priest's collar, and even then.

Suit (\$3,400) by Ravazzolo; shoes (\$760) by Church's; socks (\$35) by Pantherella.



← CUFF-LINK TRANSLATION ■ What your wrists are telling the world about you →



I love animals almost as much as hunting.
J. Press, \$39.



Life is complicated, but I am not.
Brooks Brothers, \$95.



These are by Bulgari. Oh, you spotted that Bulgari, \$215.



I'm probably the next Jack Welch.
Dunhill, \$250.



Gin and tonic, on the double. Hold the tonic.
Smart Turnout, \$75.



Deep down I'm really very shallow.
Thomas Pink, \$105.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight

Classic: 15 mg. "tar," 1.0 mg. nicotine; Lights: 12 mg. "tar," 0.8 mg. nicotine; Menthol: 15 mg. "tar," 1.1 mg. nicotine; Menthol Lights: 12 mg. "tar," 1.0 mg. nicotine

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THE OFFICE COLOR GUIDE

And What to Do About Black

Because no one should look like an undertaker. Except an undertaker.



With a black micropattern: Even a seemingly monochromatic pattern can be helped with a little color. The purple in the tie's dots matches the fine trim of the shirt's stripes and even a hairline shade in the jacket.

Suit (\$595) by Kenneth Cole; shirt (\$250) by Paul Smith; tie (\$135) by Etro.

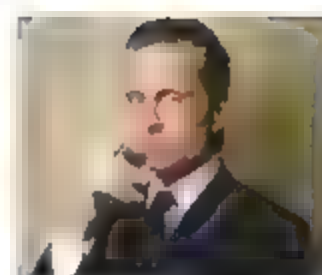
With a black pinstripe: Lighten up a sober black business suit with gentle hues of light blue and steel gray. These broadly spaced stripes add an airy freshness to an otherwise conservative look.

Suit (\$695) by Joseph Abboud; shirt (\$175) by Hickey Freeman; tie (\$195) by Luigi Borrelli.

With a black solid: This is as close to a blank slate as you're gonna get, so you have plenty of color options. The lavender in this shirt isn't too strong and balances out the reddish-brown stripes in the tie.

Suit (\$570) by DKNY; shirt (\$335) by Canali; tie (\$135) by Ralph Lauren Black Label.

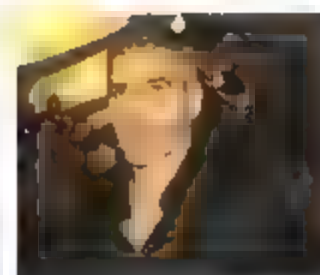
DON'T CALL ME MR. PINK ■ How to wear a dark suit without looking like a Reservoir Dog



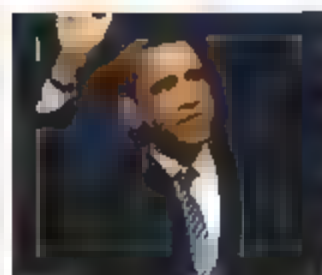
With a contrast-collar shirt
Douglas, M.



With a vest
Caine, M.



With all black
Clooney, G.



With a colorful tie
Obama, B.



With an open collar
Ford, T.



Introducing the first compact SUV from Volkswagen.



Oh, wait.
There it is.



Meet the Volkswagen Tiguan. This is going to be huge.

Introducing the new Tiguan. The small SUV that's big in stature. In fact, the Tiguan was named European SUV of the Year by *Auto Bild* magazine*. Probably because it's the only SUV packing the famously fast 2.0L turbocharged direct-injection GDI engine. So you get power and fuel efficiency** in one tight little package. And we even found room to fit a three-year Carefree Maintenance Program. A compact SUV that's going to make a big impression. **It's what the people want.**



Das Auto.

vw.com



SOME PERFECTION IS DEBATABLE.

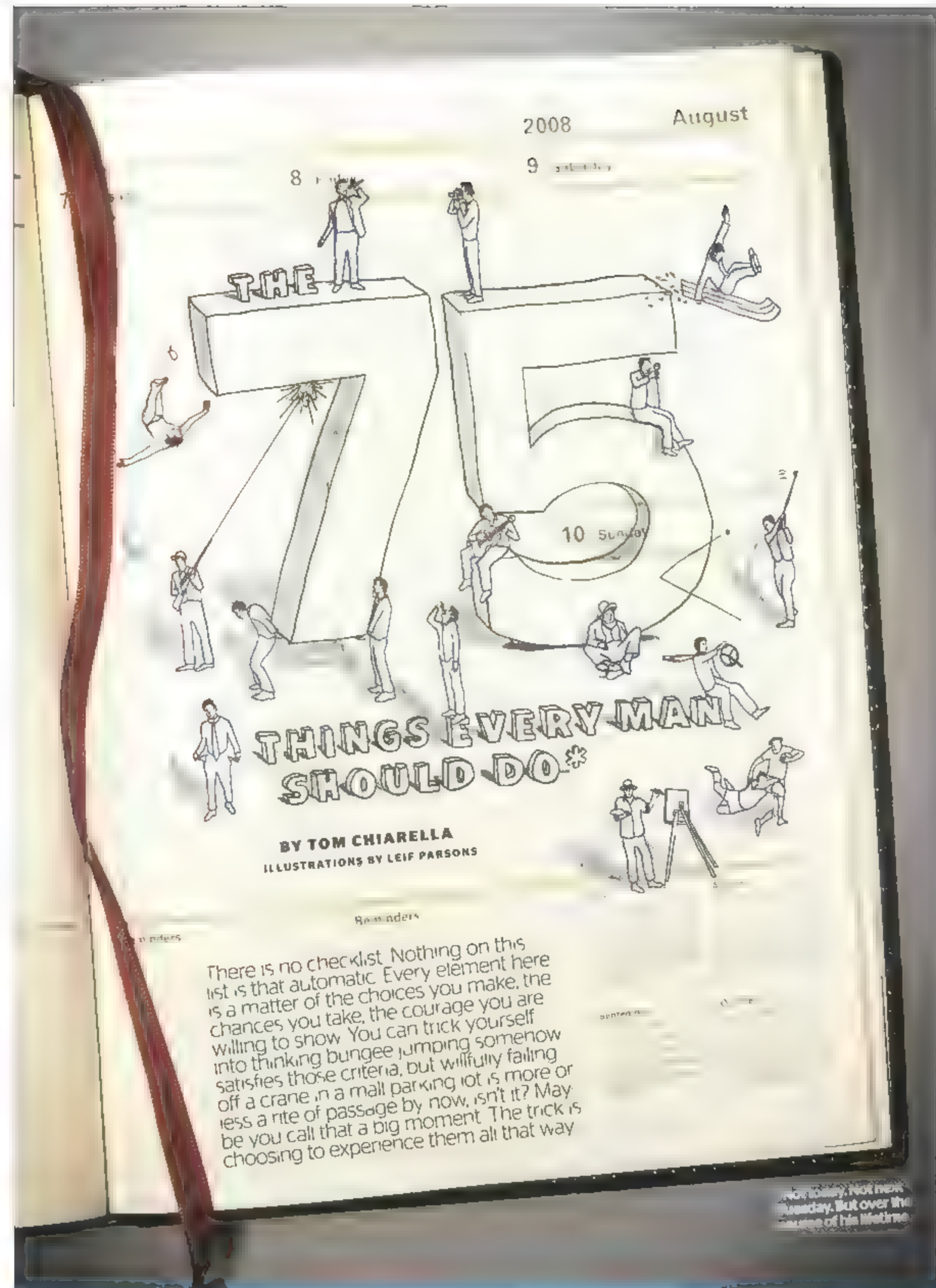


SOME IS NOT.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75

SOME PERFECTION IS DEBATABLE.



SOME IS NOT.

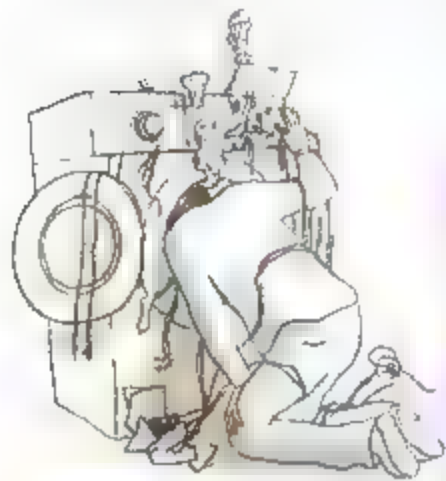
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AT LEAST ONCE IN HIS LIFE, A MAN SHOULD:

No. 1 Play rugby.

Banging clavicles with guys seventy pounds heavier than you is intensely proximate and a little scary. The grass, the sweat, the grunts belie that the game is deft and strategic, demanding occasional bursts of speed and a team-wide constancy of smarts. Large, small, quick, slow—there is a place for every man on the pitch. The smears of blood, the skull-against-skull trash talk, the arms clamped to shoulders, the generalized requirement to drink beer with your opponents afterward, even the fact that no one outside the UK can name a single professional rugby player—nor much cares to—make this the last intensely male, broadly human team sport.



No. 2 Repair an appliance.

Back when I lived in an apartment, I once left the door of an old refrigerator open while I went to the beach. When I got back three days later, it was shot. I had little money and didn't want to lose my deposit, so with just a wrench, a screwdriver, and a pair of pliers, I pulled out the compressor and took it to a repair shop, where the clerk diagrammed refrigeration on the lid of a box, taught me how to solder, directed me to a suitable salvage yard, gave me a plate of homemade spaetzle, and invited me to join the Moose Lodge. I learned something every step of the way. That, I've always figured, is the idea.

No. 3 Fly the red-eye from Vegas.

No. 4 Fly a Cessna. Take the stick.

The tension of a flight stick in your hand is both electric and watery, charged and neutral. What you sense is that you could keep going along like this forever, that in some ways flying is like walking. But you're still fingertipping an amalgam of risk and power, a loud and gusty balance. You don't have a clue what

gravity is, or what horsepower can do, until you are one solid body sneeze from a 1,200-foot nosedive.

No. 5 Make a list of seventy-five things you want to do before you die. It's hard.

No. 6 Fast for three days. Drink water.

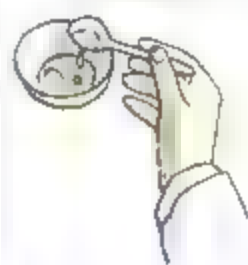
Not talking about a juice fast. Not an induction diet. Just a pure nothing-in-your-mouth fast.

No. 7 Drive the Great Ocean Road in southern Australia. Or the Pacific Coast Highway. Or the Ring Road in Iceland.

It doesn't even matter if you stop. A two-day-long drive next to an open body of water is among the twentieth century's most meditative gifts to travel.

No. 8 Make a perfect omelet.

A good omelet is a left-brain, right-brain deal. In some ways it's the most assembly-line cooking of the day. Two eggs, cheese, two moves with the spatula, flip. Bah. At the same time, it can be highly improvisational, requiring that you sweep up everything useful in the refrigerator—scraps of expensive French cheese, the forgotten chili pepper, the half-moon of red onion, the finger pinch of dill—and revile it all with a little butter and some heat. Add one or two teaspoons of water to the eggs before you beat them, allowing for a higher heat under the pan.



STEP 1
Beat 2 eggs.



STEP 2
In a separate pan, sauté meats and vegetables like ham and mushrooms to use as fillings. You won't have time to start this once the eggs hit the pan.



STEP 3
Pour beaten eggs into omelet pan. When eggs set, add fillings. Fold over and flip only once.



STEP 4
Serve. Eat.

No. 9 Drive by yourself from coast to coast.

Distance is an essential American pleasure, the greatest American chore. Each of us must conquer it.

No. 10 Recognize the accomplishments of others.

There is no harm in recognizing that many have done more than you could reasonably expect of yourself.

No. 11 Do a flip off a diving board. Nail it.

No. 12 Leave yourself a letter in a library book. Look for it twenty years later.

Pick an obscure biography in a college library, since no one there wants to insult obscurity by decataloging a book, and the library will most likely always be there. One page. Be discreet. Type it on erasable bond, tuck it in the back, and hope that no one ever notices. As for content, skip the hopes and dreams. Mention the weather, tell yourself what you ate that morning, make a list of your friends, note how much you weigh and whether you feel fat, remind yourself of a secret you want to keep.

No. 13 Watch a bad movie so often that when you see it by accident, you can recite lines verbatim.

Just before they are spoken. I use *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. That's how I learned you do not fuck with Majestic's crew.

No. 14 Toboggan, aggressively.

No. 15 Scuba dive.

Breathing underwater for the first time, even if it's in the deep end at the local Y, is a complex and physically paradoxical moment. Every breath you take is loud, tastes bad, and is borne up from a gradually lessening anxiety. It must have been like this when you were born, and it will surely be like this when you die. The beauty is, now you can go deeper.

No. 16 Drink mescal in Mexico.

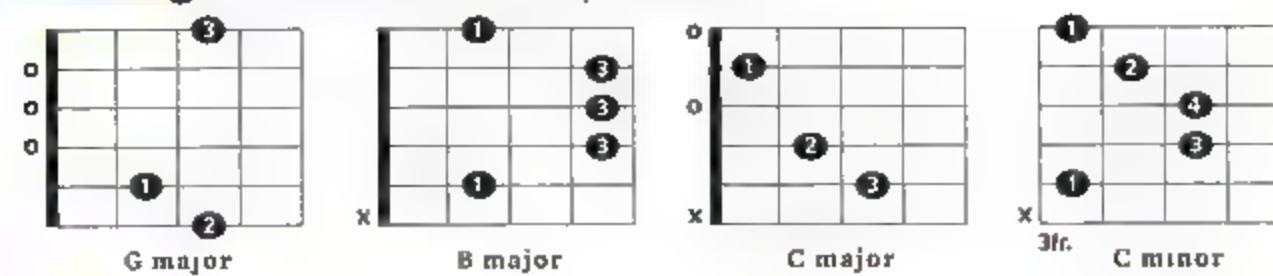
Mescal is best served outdoors, in the heat, in a small, clear glass, with the late-afternoon sunlight twirling through it. For some reason it always feels like late afternoon in Mexico. More so when you're drinking mescal.

No. 17 Cultivate a reputation.

A rake. A scalawag. A neer-do-well. A scoundrel. Even a reprobate. There is power in the way people perceive you, especially when they think they have you figured out. It is essential that you are, at some point, considered one of these. If only for a short while, and only by a small group.

No. 18 Learn three to four chords on the guitar, until you can play one song.

G B C Cm – "Creep," by Radiohead



No. 19 Live in a hotel suite for a week.

Lean into the services a good hotel offers as if it were a way of life and it will be. On the first day, order the same breakfast to be delivered to your room at the same time, every day thence. Tell them you like the newspaper on the cart, with no plastic bag. Take long showers. Stop in at the front desk for messages. Greet the doormen with a twenty. Take walks. Take saunas. Learn the name of the room-service manager. Establish a routine involving a cocktail, the balcony, and a bowl of olives. Tell the concierge to make you seven dinner reservations for seven nights. Tell him to surprise you. After you leave, go back a year later and they will remember your name. At a hotel, it is good to be known.



No. 20 Milk a cow.

Drink that. So, place your hand on the udder—warm, a little pimply, vaguely wet—squeeze, and pull gently forward. The process is taxing only in terms of patience. The sound in the bucket is like lightly dragging a house key against a thick sheet of tin. Stay with it in service to the next act: the tipping of the bucket. Drink. You may not want another sip—in fact, you might not ever want half-and-half in your coffee again—but there is no denying that what you drink from that bucket is surprisingly warm, undeniably alive, and not at all what you thought milk to be.

No. 21 Build a fence.

Remember, building a fence is eminently fair. You are giving the other person the same thing you are getting: privacy.

No. 22 Carry a totem in your pocket—a watch, a badge, a medal, a poker chip, a silver certificate—for one year.

Then give it away. My dad, whose brothers were tailors, carried a thimble on his key ring for forty years. In our house, where keys were constantly interchanged and lost, it marked the set as his. Several years ago, he gave the thimble to me. He'd had several strokes by then, and he was afraid he was going to lose it. I told him to put it away instead, to leave it on his dresser. He shrugged and asked me why. "I can't remember anything," he told me. "And you can. That's the point of a thing like that."

No. 23 Help someone dig out.

Not a loan, although loans—thoughtfully given—are fine. Offer guidance. Check in, visit, ask questions, be present. Often the person in trouble—money, drugs, whatever—simply cannot see the path. Stay on it yourself and let them hear the sound of your voice. They may just stumble toward you.

No. 24 Pick an animal. Something cool like a wolverine. Go see it in

the wild. Or watch the miraculously fine *Planet Earth* on an HDTV. After that, you won't need a zoo. Tell people as much.

No. 25 Shoplift. Then return what you stole.

No. 26 Throw a real party.

Memorable for something other than cake, party favors, or strippers. If you never live in another country—that is, rent a flat, get a car, buy groceries, greet the same people every day, struggle with the intricacies of the native language for a period of more than a few weeks—then you don't really have a right to comment on much except the price of gas. It used to be men joined the Navy to see the world; people went to college to study abroad. Now we huddle and cringe at the price of the euro. Grow a set and get out of the country for a while.

No. 28 Start something that scares you.

Deal with your most gnawing fears, the kind that have been present inside you so long that you deal with them mostly by avoiding them. Public speaking, that gut, the drinking thing, money. Make a plan.



No. 29 Choose a word or a phrase and actively work to never use it again.

Very. Really. Cool. Like. Man. Bro. What's up? Was-sup? 'Sup? I'll shoot you an e-mail. Think outside the box. Under the bus. You know. Choose your poison.

No. 30 Eat mussels in Bruges.

An impossibly large aluminum bucket of steamed mussels, a bottle of Brugse Zot, and a small plate of pickles, with the afternoon light trundling downward along ancient stone streets, make this vaguely precious little Belgian city the last tourist trap in the world worth the trip.

No. 31 Break a sheet of plate glass with a ball-peen hammer.

Sheer destructive pleasure should not be the sole province of children. Fill a niche. Choose something in between barbecue (the coward's preference) and chocolate soufflé (stagnant and useless on most occasions).

No. 33 Overspend.

THINGS YOU SHOULD DO ONLY WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING:

Moisturize.

Visit howtodate-asianwomen.com.

Challenge a child to a staring contest.

Appreciate the smell of a hyacinth.

Look in the mirror at any angle that necessitates rotating your head.

Testicular exams.

No. 34 Have a three-some. Profound, for all that is there, and for everything that is missing.

No. 35 Quit something you love.

Collections are good. Hobbies are fine. Compulsions are essentially hobbies that annoy the people around you.

No. 36 Take care of someone else's three-year-old for a day. It may be rough going. But you'll never learn a child's humanity with a howdy-do. Time is the best gift you can give a child. The parents like it, too.



No. 37 Get very good at a sport that isn't a sport. Horseshoes. Poker. Beanbag toss. Discuss this with no one. Use it when the time comes. Rest assured, the time will come. When it does, don't take over, don't push others around. Just execute and dominate.

No. 38 Listen to war stories. Buy a veteran a beer. Ask your questions.

No. 39 Tell war stories. Hold forth. There are people who cannot remember a time when R.E.M. was a bar band, but let me tell you, some of us were there to see it.

No. 40 Write someone else's life story without mentioning yourself. Makes a pretty good gift.

No. 41 Sing in public.

No. 42 Sell everything you don't need. Once.

Selling helps you understand the grim reality of value. Why do we bitch about cars depreciating 30 percent the moment we drive them off the dealer's lot but persist in filling our closets with T-shirts that are worthless the minute we first shoulder into them? To find out how to really live, you have to find out what you really need. Sheaves are laid bare, compulsions are revealed, value is defined.

No. 43 Play golf at Carnoustie.

The Old Course is nearby, sure. But you have to enter a daily lottery—or pay through the nose—to play St. Andrews, North, across the Tay, hooked between the shore and the railroad line, sits Carnoustie, site of seven British Opens. Muscular, isolated, nasty-tough, and often empty, it's everything a real golfer craves.

No. 44 Play chess until you beat someone you shouldn't, then quit forever.

Chess requires repetition similar to doing piano scales. It demands a vocabulary similar to a new language. It urges the mind toward higher levels of logic. It can stave off Alzheimer's, increase memory, and give you stronger erections. Okay, I made up that last part. But it is easy to get pretty good at chess quickly, and even an unlikely victory is sweet. The real trick is understanding that true mastery demands a lifetime.

No. 45 Give up your seat.

It may mean nothing and you may be refused, but offering your seat is a thread of dignity in a world too often defined by the rocking and jolting of an airport shuttle bus.

No. 46 Kill, dress, cook, and eat wild game.

The first rule of dressing an animal is to remove the intestines, lungs, liver, and heart as soon after the kill as possible. If you can't han-

dle that thought, then you have no business shooting at anything.

No. 47 Attend the funeral of someone you didn't know that well.

Attendance at a funeral registers. You don't have to stick around. You don't have to cry. You can just sit there and take some lumps for the copy guy you ignored, or the coworker you basically forgot about, or the neighbor you never properly introduced yourself to. Sometimes the best respect you can offer is the last respect.

No. 48 Take a vow.

Keep it. Whatever you choose, it should be hard and it should be obvious. Give up watching sports for a year. Or give up drinking for three weeks. Celibacy for three months (or three days). Silence for three hours (then three weeks). Measure your own habits carefully; a good vow should put you in deep tension with them.

No. 49 Eat a six-course meal that you prepared. No need for anything complicated or outside the range of a decent cook. Here's a menu I use:

Glazed pecans

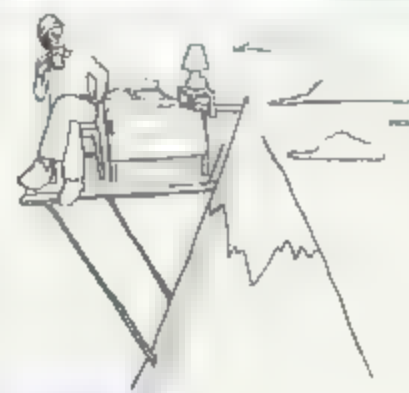
Avocado, hearts of palm, and thinly sliced red onions, tossed in vinaigrette

A good bisque

Boneless rib roast with garlic mashed red potatoes, and green beans tossed in rice vinegar

Fruit and cheese plate, with a little port

Chocolate mousse, with coffee or a dessert wine



No. 50 Live at a high altitude.

Climb if you must. Scale peaks. But simply living at above 10,000 feet is a kind of physical test; your body does more with less. It's an economy of living.

No. 51 Spend some time working for tips.

If you are a person who does not tip, if you regularly stiff waiters and bartenders, then stop reading this because that means you are not really an adult, let alone a man. The tip is a tacit social contract that allows the proprietors to skip out

on the burden of compensation. It fails to you. Waiters make next to nothing, maids deal with your fingernail trimmings and your skid marks for a few dollars a day, bellmen treat you like a king when you may in fact be a schmuck. There's no better way to understand a good tip than by working for one.

No. 52 Overeat for a week. In fairy

No. 53 Make a movie, even a short one.

Not a YouTube video. A movie, with a story. In this there are only two certainties. You will fail, the first time at least. And you will discover how much you take for granted in your own consumption of movies. Sound. Lighting. Costume. Makeup. Coherence.

No. 54 Give a panhandler all of your money.

Most of us spend the early years of our adult lives walking straight by the people standing on street corners or at freeway exits asking for money. Probably with good reason. There's a cautionary tale for every moment of real charity. Now clean out your pockets. Do it when you have some money on you. Empty the wallet. Pick it clean. Just give it. Make no demands. Expect nothing. Not even a thank-you. Then you'll understand that you may not even deserve that much.

No. 55 Make beer, wine, or moonshine.

It makes you appreciate the fact that the course of humanity was changed by the product of rotting grain and fruit. It further makes you appreciate the persistent availability of a six-pack of Michelob, an excellent twenty-dollar cabernet, or a couple of fingers of a single-cask whiskey.

No. 56 Read Lolita.

No. 57 Have sex in a body of water. Ocean. Lake. Pond. Stream. Swimming pool. Hot tub. Bathtub. Sink. Or just the melted ice on the kitchen table after a cocktail party.

No. 58 Ride a horse. Cowboys may look terminally bored, but there's nothing predictable or routine about effectively interacting with a huge four-legged animal that weighs five or six times what you do and could kick you into any fence it chooses. A good horse understands exactly what you are capable of and is willing to put you to the test.

No. 59 Eat congee. Eat haggis. Eat tongue. Eat kidneys. Eat brain. Eat testicles.

Ideally in a place where these foods are traditionally served. Picky eaters are hardly men.

No. 60 Walk twenty miles. Bring water.

There are reasons people take pilgrimages, and not all of them have to do with the destination. The only way to gauge the size of the planet is to move yourself across a large swath of it, whether on a hard-scrabble path or the broad shoulder of an interstate. Time translates differently when you walk; miles register in lumps rather than minutes.

Nos. 61-63 Go to the desert. Take long-lasting drugs. Drink water.

Not talking about Vegas. Not talking about Lunesta, either.

No. 64 Watch television for twenty-four hours uninterrupted. You probably already did this.



No. 65 Save something from the dump.

Pull something off the street (a couch, a painting, a wobbly end table) and fix it up (sand, tighten, glue). You'll strike a blow against mindless waste, learn a little about craft, and, when your kids go to college, they'll thank you for providing their room decorations.

No. 66 Climb something you are afraid of. Mountain, rock wall, water tower, tree, ladder.

No. 67 Get a manicure.

Ask for a clear buff finish and to take the cuticles way down. Despite everything you assume, the process is a lot less silly and the results a lot more evident than you might imagine.

No. 68 Eat a two-course meal that you grew.

Only in the last few generations of humanity have we been free to divorce ourselves from the process of producing food. This is a form of lying about what the world truly is and always will be: a brilliant struggle, punctuated by the occasional triumph of a great damned tomato.

No. 69 Get a deep-tissue massage. Tell them to make it hurt.

No. 70 Sleep outside for a week.

Backcountry or back porch. Doesn't matter, so long as you can see stars.

No. 71 Put a hundred bucks on a long shot. To win.

Stand right on the rail, breathe deep the gathering mist. That is the smell of a sucker bet. Never forget it.

No. 72 Go to Paris. Tell no one where you are. Stay there for two weeks.

The idea being: Meet a woman, sleep with her in a third-floor walk-up. But forego gras, a little vin ordinaire, and a book bag full of novels, that's good, too.

No. 73 Raise a dog.

I had four dogs in my life and not a one of them was worth shit. Then I raised a dog who saved me from a pit of despair by being my companion, my interpreter of the world, my guardian. She is sitting right beside me as I type this. First dog I've ever loved, last one I'll ever get.

No. 74 Peg the speedometer.

You only have to do it once to tell people you crave speed. You may only have to do it once to realize that it scares you shitless. Either way, flooring it is one part of learning what a car ought to be.

No. 75 Bungee jump. What the hell.

Learn to sew.

Close your eyes and smile at a nice memory.

Ride a Vespa.

Savor a grasshopper cream, crème de menthe, and white crème de cacao.

Sit in your boss's chair.

Tear up with the family on *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

The cleaning lady.

NUMBER 76.



Handcrafted, triple-distilled, perfectly aged, elegantly bottled. Simply perfect.

patronspirits.com

10 Things

YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN

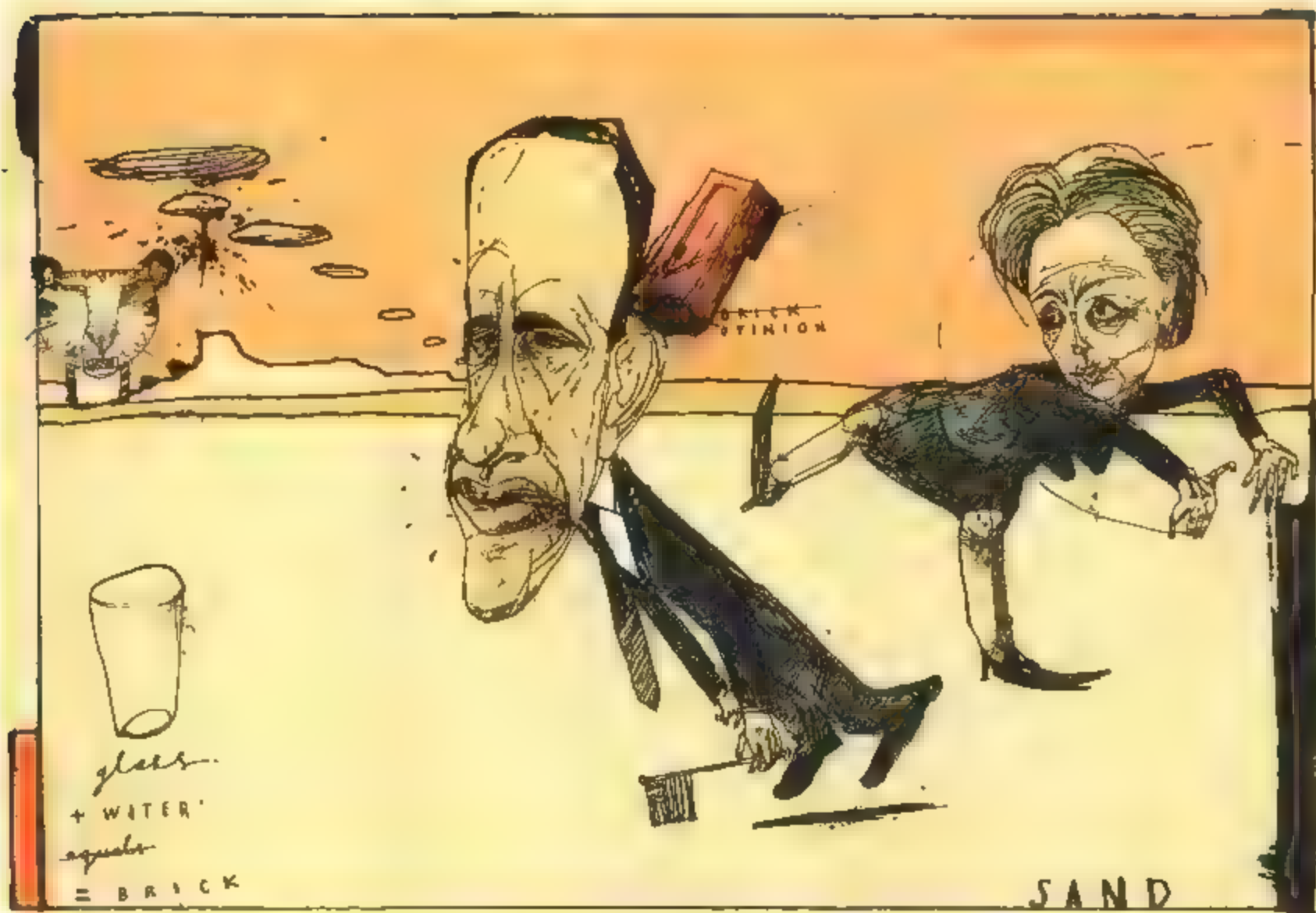
By Andrea Savage



PHOTOGRAPH BY RAMONA ROSA ES

1. Wedding rings need to be sparkly to remind us not to have sex with other people
2. Completely shaving your genitals does not make them look bigger. It just makes you look gay.
3. And if you do shave it off, fair warning is essential. Otherwise it's as startling as a hairless cat jumping out of your pants. And no one looks sexy being startled in the nude.
4. Murdering someone because he snores should be admissible in a court of law.
5. We hate baby showers as much as you assume a sane person would.
6. After being married, hearing "You're hot" from a total stranger means a hundred times more than hearing it from your husband.
7. If teenage boys knew that no matter what they look like, knowing how to dance will get them laid at every wedding they attend in their twenties, cotillions would be waitlist only.
8. We don't understand your fascination with boobs, but we're happy you have it.
9. A rebound relationship has only one true purpose: Just be interesting enough to keep me from having sex with my ex.
10. We love that you are reading this to learn more about us. You're adorable.

Andrea Savage can be seen opposite Will Ferrell in *Step Brothers*, in theaters July 25.



Why You're Reading This

RETIRED GENERALS, FOOD BLOGGERS, MUSIC CRITICS, JOHN MCCAIN, YOU—ALL OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE OPINIONS, AND MOST OF THEM ARE EQUALLY VALID, OR NOT.

I am supposed to have a lot of opinions about things. Very often, people ask me my opinion about things I've barely even thought about before. This is always an enjoyable experience, but I never understand why they are interested in my response. I certainly don't think it's because they believe my opinion is accurate; I think it's probably because they like knowing that a potentially inaccurate opinion has the potential to exist (and that holding such an opinion is socially acceptable, particularly if the holder has no specialized knowledge of the subject itself).

gravity (fundamental force): Consistent but not difficult to overcome if you are powered by rocket fuel or named David Thompson. Ultimately a drag on society and a constant reminder of human limitation, gravity is unoriginal, extremely conservative, and doesn't seem contemporary. There's really no reason things need be heavy. One is forced to ponder why gravity has remained so popular for so long. *D+*

brick (object): Symmetrically designed and eminently throwable at police cars, the brick is both a literal cornerstone of society and a keen metaphor for postholiday abortion within the music of Ben Folds.

Five Though still ideal for building cathedrals and/or describing a specific shade of red, its limitations have become more evident over time—bricks do not make good boats and are utterly useless as foodstuffs. *★★★★☆*

cautious optimism (state of mind): A more straightforward version of "upbeat pragmatism," this is a decent way to feel about heated political elections, pregnancy tests, and the Atlanta Braves. It does not, however, instill confidence in others—people who say they are cautiously optimistic are usually just pretending that they're not secretly doomed. This sentiment also involves a lot of forced smiling and illogical rationalization about how good things are supposed to happen to good people. *Overrated.* *■■■■■■■■■■*

Last weekend I was in a hashish bar. It was post-dusk, pre-night. The music was terrible. I was sitting next to a British man with a shaved head and a profound speech impediment; our conversation required subtitles, so I imagined them in my mind. He told me that he had lost three family members within the past year: his mother, who was sixty-six, his uncle, who was fifty-six, and

his sister, who was forty-six. He said he was thirty-six. He asked me if I saw any pattern developing. I said, "Yes, but only numerically." I asked what he did for a living. He said he was a housepainter. He asked me the same question about myself.

"I manufacture opinions," I said.
"Really?" he asked. "How do you know if you're any good at that?"

"By the number of people who strongly agree or strongly disagree with me," I said. "If a large number of strangers seem to think one of my opinions is especially true or wildly inaccurate, there is somehow a perception that I am being successful."

"That's an interesting job," said the British man who could barely talk. "I guess house painting is a totally different thing."

Chris Cornell's old hair (1993 follicle collective): An idealized manifestation of the Pacific Northwest hair-farmer aesthetic, the multilayered strands of black protein protruding from the skull of Soundgarden's sinewy frontman broke all the rules. Even when Cornell was shirtless and dirty, his hair appeared lush and manageable. For pure feathery madness, only the head of ex-Ozzy Osbourne guitarist Jake E. Lee could compete. A lost classic. *89, 100*

The Civil War (nineteenth-century American conflict): This overly complex and self-indulgently brutal affair was apparently about slavery, or states' rights, or cotton, or Ken Burns. The details are irrelevant, what matters more is that this "war" featured an inordinate amount of hyperviolent brother-on-brother action, which (at the time) wasn't even considered pornography. For fans only. *36 percent approval rating*

dead tigers (large nonbreathing felines): Despite the sublime beauty of their suddenly accessible fur, it's hard to build up much enthusiasm for any random collection of deceased six-hundred-pound jungle cats. Dead tigers might have been cool in the dead-tree era, but—in this accelerated Internet age—how do they remain relevant? For completists only. *★★★★☆*

Sometimes I am reminded of an opinion I once expressed long ago, only to find that I cannot recall having ever expressed said opinion at any point in my entire life. When forced to reconsider the forgotten sentiment in the present tense, I tend to agree with myself about 80 percent of the time. I have no idea if this is higher or lower than average, but it seems troubling that I (evidently) disavow 20 percent of everything I choose not to remember.

Keith Olbermann's soul (symbolic representation of self): More present and engaged than that of most Americans, but also darker and possibly smaller. I agree with the vast majority of how this particular soul is intellectually represented in the public sphere, but its delivery mechanism can be such a jerk about it that I sometimes find myself wishing I did not. Confounding and Gore Vidal-like. *B+*

swallowing your own vomit (unconscious physical reaction): A lot of unfunny bloggers have made this medical happenstance

GERMAN RAPPER OF THE MONTH

Sido is a rapper from Berlin. His real name is Paul Wüldig. He sometimes wears a metal mask (much like Mad Vain), and his rapping style is akin to a slower version of Eminem or a more aggressive version of Coolio. Sido writes about class inequity and the narcotics trade, and he allegedly hates Linkin Park; if you're the type of person who likes hip-hop but reads Esquire instead of XXL, you'll probably like this guy. But here's the problem: He only raps in German. It's impossible to parse what the lyrics are technically about. However, I would still suggest checking this fellow out, simply because it allows you to experience culture in a vacuum.

When you see the video for a track like "Mein Block," you will immediately understand what the song is about. Even without the clarity of language, you can grasp the perspective of the artist and the conditions of his creation. The beats and the environment feel familiar. Ninety seconds into the song, you start to forget that you can't understand the words—somehow they seem both present and irrelevant. Which raises an interesting question: If we unconsciously understand what something is supposed to be, does it even matter what it is? —C.K.



pejorative, but it's really not that bad. It's certainly better than vomiting on another person or choking to death, and it acts as a natural reminder of what kind of lifestyle you have chosen for yourself. Swallowing vomit isn't all that different from swallowing Jägermeister, all things considered. *Underrated.* *★★★★★*

Jennifer Love Hewitt's left femur (celebrity bone): Everybody likes to focus on this woman's bosom, but that seems so reductive. What about the longest bone on the left side of her body, deftly connecting the hip with the patella? Love Hewitt's left thighbone strikes me as unusually long (at least considering her overall skeletal frame), and I feel like it lacks the convincing self-assurance of her right femur (or even—dare I say it?—her right humerus). It has, however, proven to be wildly reliable (not one compound fracture in her entire two-decade career!) and does not display any outward signs of calcium depletion. Say what you will about Jennifer Love Hewitt's left femur, but do not discount its intensity; we're going to be seeing this dynamic os femoris for quite some time. *B+*

I don't trust anyone's opinion on anything. I really don't. Why would I? I will listen to people's advice, but I never expect that advice to be correct more than 50 percent of the time. I love asking people their opinions about things, but mostly because I enjoy hearing people talk about themselves by pretending to talk about other things.

shattering glass (sound): Whether it's opening a mid-period Billy Joel album, punctuating an Irish car bomb, or causing Bill Raftery to exclaim, "Send it in, Jerome!" the sonic quality of shattering glass is weirdly unswerving—it always sounds exactly the same. It also expresses a unilateral aura of foreboding: Nobody has ever heard the shattering of an unseen pane of glass without immediately thinking, *Something bad just happened.* That is going to be expensive. Unless you're marrying a Jew, this is the sound of bad news. *C*

absolute zero (-459.67 degrees Fahrenheit): I have a lot of mixed feelings about the temperature at which molecules reach zero-point energy and essentially stop moving. Sure, it's an electrifying moment for so-called "thermodynamicheads," but can the casual fan of extremely low temperatures truly appreciate the thrill of a moment when absolutely nothing happens? Too much like the band Tortoise. *★★★★☆*

abrupt endings (narrative device): *★*

I Am a Martyr

(AND
SO CAN
YOU!)

A guide to white male victimhood

BY STEPHEN COLBERT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ART STREIBER

THREE BUTTON SUIT BY PERRY ELL, 5 COTTON SHIRT, 1 INKIE POCKET SQUARE AND TIE BY BROOKS BROTHERS





TWO BUTTON WOOL SUIT COTTON SHIRT AND SILK TIE BY RALPH LAUREN BLACK LABEL

Greetings, Nation.*

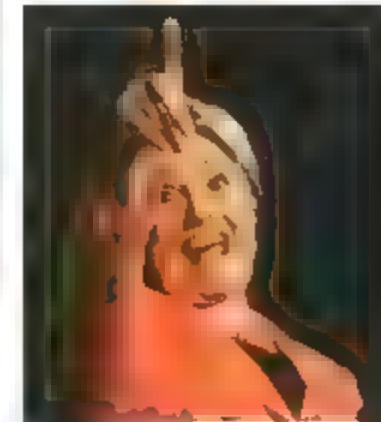
America is facing a crisis. Need proof? Well, if this weren't a crisis, I would never have asked you to read an article this long. Personally, when I pick up *Esquire*, I just flip to the Answer Fella or maybe check out how Stacey Grenrock Woods weighs in on three-way mango stroking. (She's "pro"—as long as it's consensual.) But this is too important. I must speak out on behalf of a people without a voice.

Today's political landscape is now dominated by Black Men



[The "Man"]

and White Women,



[The "Not-a-Man"]

while one group has been completely marginalized: the White Male.

Sure, you can still find the occasional example of white men in power. A token 389 in Congress. A conciliatory seven or so on the Supreme Court. One in the White House.



[A separate House for Whites? What year is this? C'mon!]

For one brief, shining seven and a half years, we've had a president who, to paraphrase Kanye West, "cares about white people." But folks, that soon may be over.

Now, I'm sure some of you out there are saying, "But white men have held the reins of power for thousands of years. You people aren't victims." First off, who are you calling "you people"? Are we all the same to you? We are a rainbow of diversity—from beige to bone to ivory to taupe to eggshell!

And second, if we're all supposedly so equal now, then why can't white men be victims, too?

We've certainly had to deal with our share of hateful stereotypes. These days it's accepted as "fact" that white men can't jump. Ooooh, but we love swimming, right? We've all heard it before: "Just give the white guy a microbrew and an inner tube. That'll keep him happy."



[For the record, my favorite microbrew is Johnny Snow's Extra Pale Ale.]

Because really, isn't the greatest victimization of all being robbed of your ability to be the victim?

Fortunately, it doesn't take much of a revisionist squint to see a pernicious pattern of white male oppression over the past two hundred years. And if a revisionist squint doesn't work, try closing one eye and shaking your head back and forth until everything becomes a revisionist blur. Like this...okay...now I'm getting dizzy. Hold on. My head is pounding. I'm gonna need a minute. Go ahead and read this while I take an Advil. Yeah, that's right, I said Advil. The "white man's pain reliever." For the kind of crushing pain that comes back in four to six hours.

Let me take you on a dark journey...



*Just by reading my words, you have officially joined the Colbert Nation, and my opinions have secured a beachhead in your brain. Now just sit back and let them spread like a freedom infection.

Stephen Colbert

PRESENTS

ONCE, WE WERE KINGS:

The Struggle of White Men
in America:

AND HOW AFTER THE
STRUGGLE, WE SUCCEEDED
FOR CENTURIES:

But Can't We Have More?

A Look Back.



In the eighteenth century, male Caucasians in America were politically powerless. As colonial subjects of the English, these white men were oppressed by an even whiter man.



[Extra-Whitely!]

And as if life for the colonial white male weren't bad enough, in 1773 a bunch of Indians tossed all their tea into Boston Harbor. Then they threw a party! And now we're supposed to feel guilty for putting them on reservations? Titi for tat, Tonto!



Even after winning their independence, for four score and seven years white men had to work like slaves just to oversee their slaves.

And throughout all the white man's trials, what did women do? They wore lace, giggled, and fiddle-dee-dee'd. It was enough to drive the white man to drink... that is, until the Women's Temperance League stole that, too, with Prohibition.



[Ironically, she fought to end beer goggles.]

And if you thought the Eighteenth Amendment was oppressive, I'll give you one guess what came next: the Nineteenth Amendment. Women's suffrage was forced through Congress in 1920, cutting the value of white men's votes in half, and a mere nine years later, the stock market crash plunged the world into the Great Depression. Coincidence? Or legitimate reason for me to get angry? The answer: both.



[The 1930s: A nation runs out of white bread. See a pattern?]

In the 1950s, white men were forced to sit in the front of buses, where it was very bumpy. And does anybody else notice that white men didn't have any civil rights leaders? They could have had a March on Washington.

You know, through the right neighborhoods.

Then came one of the darkest chapters in American history: the Space Race, when our government launched a sinister conspiracy whose sole purpose was to shoot all white men into space.



[*... And STAY out!]

Throughout the 1970s, white men were caricatured in "whitesploitation" films like *Death Wish* and *Annie Hall*.



[All white men are scared of shellfish? Please.]

In the 1980s, white men were forced to wear effeminate pastel blazers while black men got all the cool sweaters.



[Separate but Uncool!]

Today, Barack Obama's presidential campaign presents a historic opportunity, not just for one black man to become president, but for all white men to feel powerless. It's our turn.

After two centuries of being denied our right to feel oppressed, white men are finally waking up. It's time for us to push back.

Now let me be clear, we won't be staging violent protests or marching in the streets. Then again, we won't just be doing nothing. We'll be complaining the entire time. I say we converge on Washington on the backs of our riding lawn mowers. The Million Man Mulch!

But first we need a man with courage, a man with vision, and most importantly, a man bleached bone white by the Arizona sun.

He understands the pain of our centuries-long troubled history, because he

has lived through most of it.



[The Great Pale Hope]

Who knows? With John McCain as our ghostly white beacon to guide us, we may finally re-reach that mountaintop, walk into one of the two Starbucks up there, order a half-caf (maybe an almond croissant), and proudly proclaim,

"Free at last, free-er at last, thank God Almighty, we are free-est at last!"



SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF STORIED HISTORY—IN ONE EASY PAGE, THIS MONTH.

Politics

Our political conventions may be predictable and bland, but some of the writing they have inspired here has been groundbreaking.

TERRY SOUTHERN:
"GROOVING IN CHI," NOV. 1968



Esquire sent Terry Southern, William Burroughs, and French writer Jean Genet to Chicago to cover the 1968 Democratic convention, where Eugene McCarthy faced party-backed Hubert Humphrey. The event drew thousands of protesters, including Allen Ginsberg, who were violently confronted by Mayor Richard Daley's police force.

Right after lunch we very dutifully piled into the car and headed for Convention Hall. It is exactly like approaching a military installation—barbed-wire, checkpoints, the whole bit; Genet was absolutely appalled, I was afraid he was going to be physically sick; Burroughs, of course, was ecstatic; it was all so grotesque that at one point he actually did a little dance of glee.... We had one hell of a time actually getting admitted to the hall, despite all the proper credentials. Burroughs and I, of course, are veritable paragons of fashion and decorum—but Ginsberg and Genet, it must be admitted, are pretty weird-looking guys. In any case the cluster of door cops took one look at our group—which now included Michael Cooper, an English photographer with shoulder-length hair, a purple suit, and sandals—and then simply turned away.

"Our accreditation is all in order, officer," snapped Esquire's John Berendt, indicating the door passes around our necks. "It is, huh?" said the lieutenant, not even bothering to look.

"How about his accreditation?" he said, pointing to Ginsberg, "is it in order too?" And he gave a derisive snort.

"It certainly is," said Berendt, "show him your pass, Allen."

The lieutenant fixed on Cooper. "And he's got accreditation? Hell, he ain't even got any shoes!"

NORMAN MAILER: "SUPERMAN COMES TO THE SUPERMARKET," NOV. 1960

Esquire commissioned Mailer to report on the 1960 Democratic convention. He sent back this essay—now regarded as a genre-changing classic.

Because if the boss is depressed, the delegate is doubly depressed, and the emotional fact is that Kennedy is not in focus, not in the old political focus, he is not comfortable; in fact it is a mystery to the boss how Kennedy got to where he is, not a mystery in its structures: Kennedy is rolling in money, Kennedy got the votes in primaries, and, most of all, Kennedy has a jewel of a political machine. It is as good as a crack Notre Dame team, all discipline and savvy and go-go-go, sound, drilled, never dull, quick as a knife, full of the salt of hipper-dipper a beautiful machine, the boss could adore it if only a sensible candidate were driving it, a Truman, even a Stevenson, please God a Northern Lyndon Johnson, but it is run by a man who looks young enough to be coach of the Freshman team, and that is not comfortable at all. The boss knows political machines, he knows issues, farm parity, Forand health bill, Landrum-Griffin, but this is not all so adequate after all to revolutionaries in Cuba who look like beatniks, competitions in missiles, Negroes rooting whites in the Congo, intricacies of nuclear fallout, and NAACP men one does well to call Sir

It is all out of hand, everything important is off the center foreign affairs is now the lick of the heat, and senators are candidates instead of governors, a disaster to the old family style of political measure where a political boss knows his governor and knows who his governor knows. So the boss is depressed, profoundly depressed. He comes to this convention resigned to nominating a man he does not understand, or let us say that, so far as he understands the candidate who is to be nominated, he is not happy about the secrets of his appeal, not so far as he divines these secrets; they seem to have too little to do with politics and all too much to do with the private madnesses of the nation which had thousands—or was it hundreds of thousands—of people demonstrating in the long night before Chessman was killed, and a movie star, the greatest, Marlon the Brando out in the night with them. Yes, this candidate for all his record, his good, sound, conventional liberal record has a patina of that other life, the second American life, the long electric night with the fires of neon leading down the highway to the murmur of jazz.

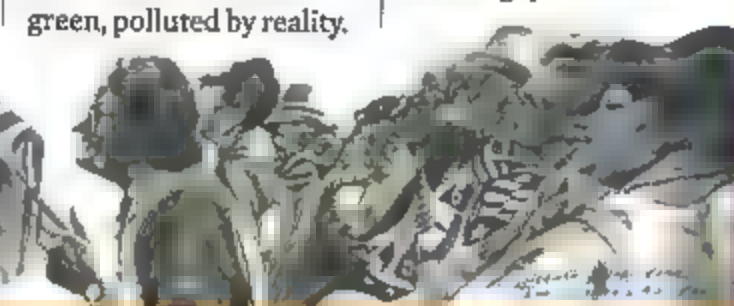
MARTIN AMIS: "RONNIE AND THE PACEMAKERS," NOV. 1988

The British take on America is something of a journalistic tradition, and in 1988 Amis was dispatched to the Republican convention to watch Ronald Reagan hand power to his successor.

All morning the hall had rung with the words of ardent glozers and fiery mediocrities, chosen for their sex or their skin color or their extremes of youth and age. Punctuated by the tinny clunk of the gavel, the clichés of the peanut-faced orators labored toward you at the speed of sound, chased by the PA echo.... Reagan got up there, and after one blooper ("Facts are stupid things"—the crowd winced so fondly, so protectively!), a few jokes, several boasts, and a lot of statistics,

shared with his countrymen the gift of the trust in a dream of a vision whose brilliant light in a shining moment showed a sweet day of extra love for a special person between the great oceans. "Here," he exhaustedly concluded, "it's a sunrise every day." Reagan's speech was an apotheosis of a kind: the rhetoric of arcadian green, polluted by reality.

Nobody liked it much, even on the floor. Yet the momentum of expectation was so far entrained that the performance somehow passed off as a triumph. This had to be the night of rich catharsis, when Reagan's image began its slow wipe, leaving Bush to hurl his first grapple hook across the stature gap.



What It Feels Like



THERE ARE TWO SIDES to every story. Like when a pilot flies a small plane into a house—you've got the pilot, of course, but what about the guy eating tacos inside? And for every man who wins a 135-mile race in the desert, there's a man who comes in second place. (Sometimes two years in a row.) You are about to experience a lifetime's worth of huge moments, both the life-altering and the mundane—a car accident, a walk-off grand slam, a first date, a high-speed motorcycle crash, three-hour sex, and more. Some are horrific, some are wonderful, and some are both—depending on who's telling the story.



...To Be a Prison Guard at Guantánamo Bay

> BY CHRISTOPHER ARENDT, 24, STUDENT

I liked working night shifts, because whenever they were awake, I wanted to apologize to them. When they were sleeping, I didn't have to worry about that. I could just walk up and down the blocks all night long.

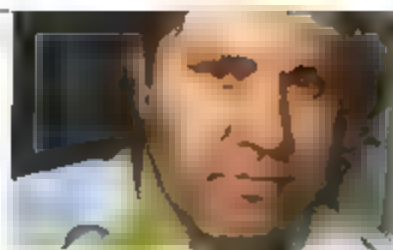
There was usually one detainee who would lead the call to prayer at five in the morning. That person was in the very last cell. The detainees, they sang beautifully. It was so eerie to hear, because it was such a beautiful song, and to hear forty-eight detainees just get up in the morning and, in unison, sing this gorgeous song that I could never understand—because Arabic is way out of my range of possibility—it was really intense.

Camp Delta is on a cliff that overlooks the ocean. I had never been to the ocean before in my whole life. There have been a few times in the military when I've been so stricken by the juxtaposition of how awful what is happening inside the moment is, and how aesthetically beautiful it is at the same time. Seeing the first couple detainees start preparing for prayer, and then at the same time the sun starting to come up over this cliff base—that was probably one of the most confusing

moments of my life. Every day you walked down the blocks, forty-eight people in two rows of twenty-four cells, and you have no idea what any of them are there for. They're just sitting in their cells. You give them food, and if they get crazy, you spray them with this terrible oil-based chemical. Then you send these five guys in to beat the shit out of them.

I grew up in Charlotte, Michigan. This was the first time that I ever met any Muslim person before in my life. My family lived in a trailer in a cornfield on a dirt road. I enlisted when I was seventeen, on November 20, 2001. Oh, my God, I met a lot of new people by enlisting.

I had bought two pornos before I left for Cuba, and I had no idea that I would get so depressed that those wouldn't even interest me. I ended up cutting them up, and I put the remnants of the pornos all over my wall. I made a wallpaper on my half of the room of all these like really grotesque pornographic photos. My mom had sent me a packet of dinosaur stickers, so all of the particularly obscene shots I covered with dinosaurs, and I would just sit and stare at that for a long time.



... To Be a Prisoner at Guantánamo Bay

BY MURAT KURNAZ, 26, AUTHOR, ACTIVIST

They used to beat everybody. There was a man—he was really old and couldn't see and couldn't hear. If the guards told him something to do and he didn't do it because he couldn't hear, they went into his cage and beat him up. They did this for a couple minutes, and after that they took him out and brought him to isolation. That happened to me as well a lot of times.

There doesn't need to be a reason. First they would use a pepper spray. It's burning. It's hot. You have trouble breathing and open-

ing your eyes. All of your face is burning—your eyes especially and inside your nose. You can't open your eyes because they are burning very hot. Since you have trouble breathing, you have to cough all the time. Then they'd punch me with their elbows. After they were done, they would write something down as to what could be the reason for it.

We were allowed to do the call to prayer every day, but they used to play music over us at the same time. The music some of the time was rock music, but most of the time they played the [American] national anthem. Or they used to kick the doors.

The worst thing about being in Guantánamo was having to live in the small cages. Most of the time there was nothing in there with me. Sometimes I had only my shorts on and nothing else. Nothing else except my shorts and myself.

I never lost my hope, of course. Not losing my hope is an important part of my religion.

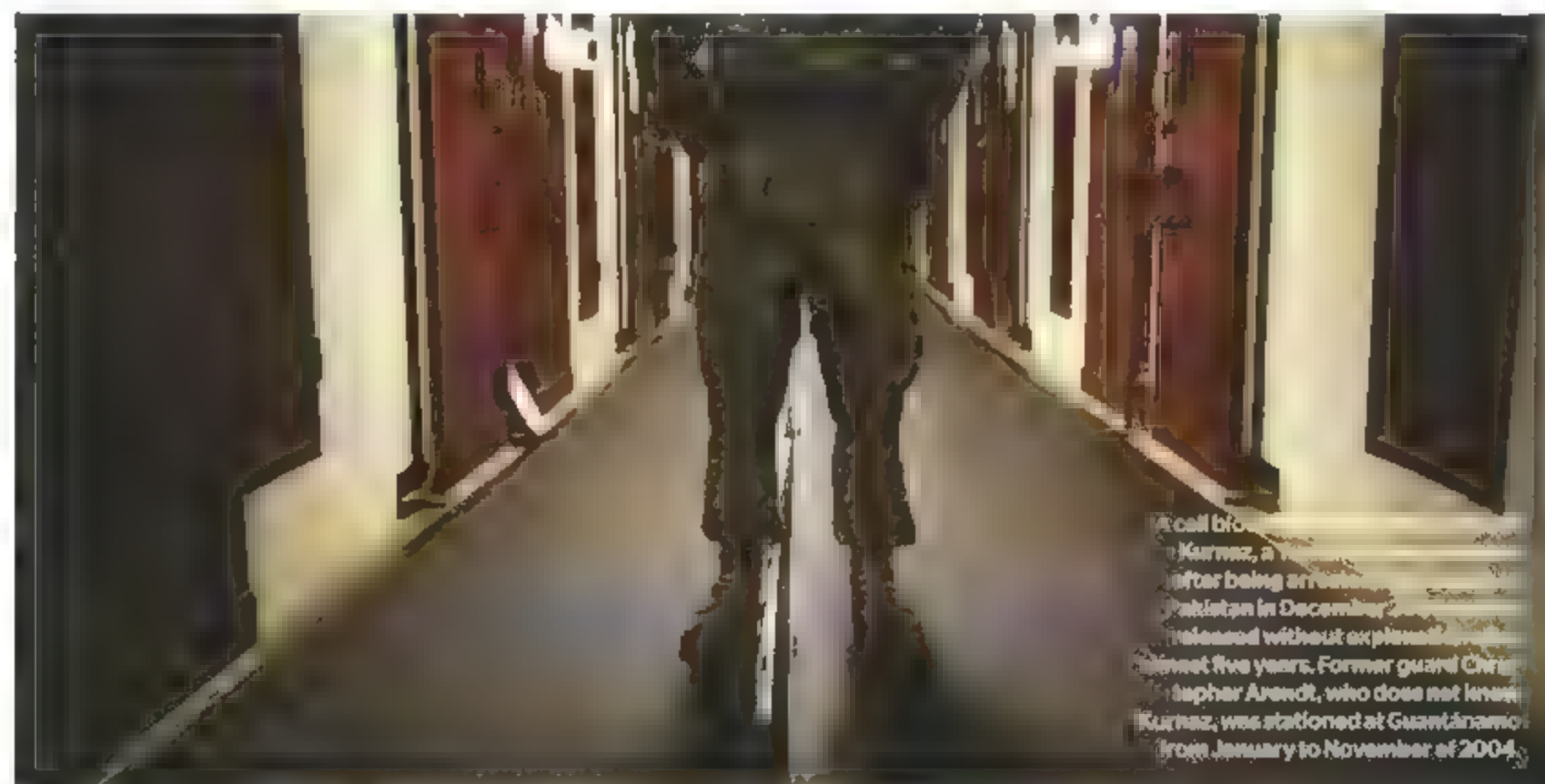
They would cover the things with flowers. Then we would have to take them. It was a ridiculous process. We would take the cups—as if they were writing some kind of secret message that they were somehow going to throw into the ocean, that would get back to somebody—and send them to our military intelligence. They would just look at these things and then throw them away. I used to love those little cups.

During the span of a few months, I worked maybe half the time on the blocks. It wasn't a whole lot of time, but it was really starting to break me down. I couldn't deal with it. I tied a 550 cord to the ceiling fan that was in my room and I tried to hang myself, but I ripped the fan out of the ceiling. I've never been happier about poor construction. That was about two months before we went home.

One thing I miss is the cups. The detainees were only allowed to have Styrofoam cups, and they would write and draw all over them. I'm not totally familiar with Muslim culture, but I did learn that they don't draw the human form, and I'm not positive if they draw any creature, but they draw a lot of flowers. They would cover the things with flowers. Then we would have to take them. It was a ridiculous process. We would take the cups—as if they were writing some kind of secret message that they were somehow going to throw into the ocean, that would get back to somebody—and send them to our military intelligence. They would just look at these things and then throw them away. I used to love those little cups.

Read an excerpt from Kurnaz's book *Five Years: An Innocent Man in Guantánamo* at esquire.com/wifi08.

—AS TOLD TO LILY PERCY



Call bio: Kurnaz, a... after being arrested in Pakistan in December... released without explanation... spent five years. Former guard Christopher Arendt, who does not know Kurnaz, was stationed at Guantánamo from January to November of 2004.

... To Win an Ultramarathon

By Scott Jurek, 34, winner, Badwater Ultramarathon (135-mile footrace), 2005

0 miles / -282 feet elevation / 10:00 a.m. It starts at Badwater, California, the lowest point in North America. You see the shimmering heat waves going across

the horizon. The pavement is really the only sign of civilization. I don't get nervous, but the idea that I'm running 135 miles today—there's that not knowing what lies

ahead. I'm wearing a white and, believe it or not, pants. They're a lightweight microfiber. I also wear an ice bandanna. I've got ice on my hat. It was about 100 degrees



... To Crash a Motorcycle at 140 mph

BY NICKY HAYDEN, 27, MOTO GP RACER

The rain started after the second lap. My helmet has a tinted shield, and I was having a hard time seeing where the deeper puddles were. Le Mans is a 2.6-mile course, and it was raining harder on different parts of the track. Puddles were changing from lap to lap. Coming into a turn on lap 26 of 28, I hydroplaned. It wasn't the kind of fall where I had time to think, I can correct this. It was instant. I went forward off the bike, but the impact wasn't too hard because I immediately started tumbling—sky, ground, sky, ground. It felt like I accelerated on the wet pavement, and then more once I hit the grass. Like a Slip 'n Slide. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my bike flip and knew they'd be bringing out the butter for it, 'cause it was toast.

... To Watch Your Son Crash a Motorcycle at 140 mph

BY ROSE HAYDEN, 58, HOMEMAKER

I was just trying to see if he was moving. I've been around this long enough to know when something is not right, but this time I couldn't tell right away. I've seen crashes and thought the person would get up but didn't. You never know. I don't think I talked to anybody. When I saw him moving around, I knew we'd be all right. The team took me by scooter in the pouring rain to the medical center. I called my husband, who was tracking the race on a computer. All he could see was that Nicky didn't turn in a lap time. I'm sure he was hoping it was a mechanical issue.

After about 150 yards, I came to a halt in the gravel. Somewhere along the way, my visor got pulled up, so I was lying there with a mouthful of dirt. Tasted pretty nasty. It all knocked the wind out of me pretty good. I tried to catch my breath and started taking inventory. Moved my toes and feet, then worked on up to my head and shoulders. Sitting there in the gravel trap with the adrenaline going, I didn't feel any physical pain yet. It was all frustration.

—AS TOLD TO BLODDY KITE

Hayden will race in the Red Bull Indianapolis GP on September 14.

Watch Nicky Hayden's 140 mph crash at esquire.com/wifi08.

... To Hit a Walk-Off Grand Slam

BY TORII HUNTER, 33, LOS ANGELES ANGELS
Bottom of the ninth; Indians 4, Angels 2; bases loaded, one out



I had hit walk-off homers before but never a walk-off grand slam—not in Little League, Babe Ruth, nowhere. I'm thinking about getting a ball into the outfield to get a run in, not trying to do too much. When you're standing in that batter's box, locked in the way I was, you can see the spin, the rotation, the seams on the baseball. And you can see how the ball looks coming off the bat. I could see backspin as soon as I made contact, so I wasn't worried about it going foul. I knew it was going out.

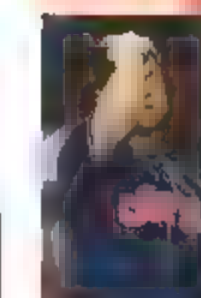
Kirby Puckett always used to tell me, "A hanging breaking ball is a gift from God. Don't miss your blessing." I was thinking about Kirby, with a big smile, when I was running the bases. When I rounded third, I saw all the guys waiting for me at the plate. I took my leap and fell into that crowd of players, and it was awesome. After I did my interview on the field, I came to the clubhouse and they were waiting for me, dousing me with beer and water. I slid on the ground and pretended like I was swimming.

—AS TOLD TO LYLE SPENCER, MLB.COM

Watch Torii Hunter hit the walk-off grand slam against Joe Borowski at esquire.com/wifi08.

... To Give Up That Walk-Off Grand Slam

BY JOE BOROWSKI, 37, CLEVELAND INDIANS



As a closer, you're the last line of defense, and I absolutely love it. I take the good with the bad. I don't ride roller coasters. In that situation with Torii Hunt-

er, you've faced him before, and you've gotten him out before. You let the ball go—it was a slider on a 1-0 count—and you know the second it comes out of your hand that it's not exactly going where you want it to, the way it has 90 percent of the time. To see him swing and hit it is the ultimate deflation. It's almost like you see it in slow motion. I saw him hit it and just knew it was out, and I started walking off the field. You feel like you've let everybody down. We fought to get back in that game. It's not easy.

—AS TOLD TO ANTHONY CASTROVINCE, MLB.COM

17 miles / -165 feet / 12:25 p.m. You're sweating a lot, although it evaporates so quick it's hard to monitor. That's the tricky thing out there. It's so dry. Sweat doesn't

even get a chance to appear. My stomach wasn't feeling great. I got passed by Ferg Hawke (second-place finisher). There's a sense of loneliness, of feeling really small

out in that landscape. **42 miles / 0 feet / 4:25 p.m.** submerged my body in this king-sized cooler of ice water. That was like heaven. It's like putting an

ice cube in a ski lift. I was a new person after that. Fifty miles left. The temperature was dropping back down toward 100, and I took off the pants. My legs felt



Lindsay Price's first nude portrait, photographed for Esquire by J. Bennett Fitts, Los Angeles, May 29, 2008.

...To Pose for Your First Nude Photo

BY LINDSAY PRICE, 31, ACTRESS

The week before the shoot, I worked out harder than I had in my entire life. I was anxious all week. The day of the shoot, I had fantasies of driving to Mexico to avoid doing it. I took the longest shower of my life, exfoliating, moisturizing, paying really close attention to where I shaved. I went to the set in my baggiest jeans and my most comfortable sweatshirt—a really antisexy outfit.

The photographer and I worked out some poses while I was still wearing my robe. My heart started beating a mile a minute when he told me it was time to get started, because I knew I'd have to take off the robe. I just yanked it off and threw it to the side really quick. I've been skydiving, and this was so much scarier than jumping out of that plane.

For the first minute, I just wanted to know what John thought and whether or not I looked okay. And then at a certain point I just forgot that I wasn't wearing any clothes. By the end, I had this abandon and this confidence. I felt sexy, I'm not an exhibitionist, but this made me understand how it's thrilling to be the center of attention, to be the sexiest one in the room. At one point I think John had to be reminded to focus his camera, and I'm wondering, Is it because I'm affecting him?

Since the shoot, I've started taking a good look at myself every time I get out of the shower. And I'm pleased. I definitely take a little longer getting dressed now.

—AS TOLD TO MERYL ROTHSTEIN

Lindsay Price stars in *Lipstick Jungle* on NBC.

To Shoot Your First Nude Photo

BY J. BENNETT FITTS, 31, PHOTOGRAPHER

I woke up at 2:00 a.m. the day of the shoot. I had to tell myself thirty times in a row, "I am a good photographer. Everything's gonna be okay." I imagined every scenario that could go wrong. I imagined doing the whole shoot out of focus.

I typically shoot lowbrow landscapes, like abandoned motel pools. Portraiture—nude portraiture—is really out of my element. On set, my heart skipped a beat when it was time to ask her to disrobe. What's the proper etiquette for asking someone to take their clothes off in this situation? I think I just told her it was time to work.

I know some people think you'd be aroused by this, but I was just focused on getting the job done. I tried to treat her like a landscape, like a compositional element of the frame. I also tried to stare at her face or the computer monitor the whole time. I didn't want to come off as the perverted photographer.

...To Have Tantric Sex

BY JIM ALFARO, 41, ENGINEER, AND GLORIA ALFARO, 37, HOMEMAKER, BUSINESS OWNER

HIM: For me, I would probably have to say four or five orgasms, maybe. For her—I don't know, ten or twelve?

HER: The last time, jeez... I lose track. I don't know, fifteen? It varies. It might be three hours, but it's not necessarily three hours of having sex. It's much more than that.

HIM: We start out facing each other—in the Yab-Yum position, which is me cross-legged and her sitting in my lap facing me, generally with our foreheads touching. We synchronize our breathing.

HER: You hold your mouth in a certain position—Cobra Breath—and breathe in the energy.

HIM: One of us will start to speed up. There's a term in tantra—*latihan*—which means "moving in the unknown." We clear the mind of any conscious thought of, Oh, I want to do this or that, and let the body do what it wants.

HER: He can literally touch me with one finger gently on my neck—not even move his finger—and I will orgasm.

HIM: I can have an orgasm without ejaculation. The first time it happened there was this rush of, Oh, what's going on? And then I realized what it was. There's a spot where you do something they call external prostate massage. She did that to me for a few minutes and I had maybe three or four orgasms, a few minutes each. All your senses are heightened. I could smell the scent from the shampoo in her hair.

HER: We had intercourse in the Yab-Yum position—I put my hands on the floor and leaned back. Then I think we got on the bed in a missionary position, then he put my knees behind my ears, with me on my back. I'm fairly flexible. After that he was more on his knees and pulled my legs in front of his body. Then we put my legs down and I put one leg down and had the other one bent—still on my back. Then doggy style. I think that's it. —AS TOLD TO LILY PERCY



like somebody had a blowtorch on them. Then a seven-mile downhill, and I was flying. I passed Ferg. **72 miles / 1,970 feet / 10:32 a.m.** I stopped at one point and sat in

a chair—I normally don't do that—and lost it. Vomiting pretty hard. I was sucking on a water bottle with my legs up in the air, looking up into the night sky. It was a beautiful

sky. That's when the doubts start to come in. Why am I doing this? Can't it wait? But eventually I got up. My legs felt like they'd been beaten with a baseball bat. I was just walk-

ing up the mountain in the dark. **90 miles / 5,050 feet / 2:32 a.m.** Ferg and I were neck and neck. The adrenaline decreased the pain. I was running with my flashlight and could

see scorpions on the side of the road. **105 miles / 3,800 feet** Running through the night. I got a little sleepy, but that sun coming up and hitting Mount Whitney was

like new life. At the same time, I still had to go up Mount Whitney. **135 miles / 8,360 feet / 10:36 a.m.** A mile out, it felt like the longest mile. I went around a bend and thought

the finish line would be there, but the road just kept going. My heart felt like it was going to burst. When I finally saw the finish, it was like a mirage. I didn't feel any pain.

...To Be Hit by a Car

> BY JEFFREY FISHER, 23, STUDENT

It was my first night in London. We were drinking—what were they called? Cider and beer Snakebites.

It's never been clear to me whether I looked or didn't look or looked the wrong way. I would argue that I naturally would have looked in the direction that I thought the cars were coming from. But we were in London, so they weren't coming from that way.

I remember a very forceful impact and then I was airborne. Isn't the comparison people make when they get hit with something to "getting hit by a car"? It was like being blindsided on a football field by somebody much, much stronger than you. My friends told me that I flew ten feet.

I remember thinking, I'm a fucking idiot. I landed kind of with my hands down, and I thought I was going to be able to get up and walk and be fine. I got up on my right foot, then I took a step with my left leg and I fell back down. It felt like my left leg wasn't attached to my body. It was totally numb. It's a surreal feeling to have what ended up being a compound fracture, which means your bone is sticking out of your leg—which I never saw. I was more embarrassed than in horrible pain.



...To Hit Someone with a Car

> RICK BATTON, 51, CONTRACTOR

I was leaving work in a pickup truck with my brother and my cousin in Phoenix, Maryland. We came to a stop light that we had come to every day around the same time, 4:15 p.m. The kid was only about four years old. All three of us saw him.

You know how when you hit the brakes real fast, the momentum of the truck pushes forward and the front kind of drops down? Well, he hit his head right on the grille. It was a plastic grille, and we could hear it crack. All three of us yelled. I couldn't see him. I didn't know if I ran all the way over him or if you don't know what happened. You don't know what the carnage is out there in front of you.

We all jumped out, and he's lying on the ground, completely out. The plastic from the grille is all around him. I'm thinking, He's definitely dead. He was about the same age as my oldest daughter at the time. You have thoughts about your own—What if somebody killed my kid? It's a terrible, terrible thought. But there was no blood. That was a good thing.

Next to me was a school bus, and all these kids were screaming. I remember a thousand faces looking down at me. It feels horrible, like you're a mass murderer or something. It seemed like the police were there instantly, but I left not knowing anything. That evening around 8:30, the phone rang, and it's this kid's father. He says, "Rick?" I'm just sitting there and probably didn't breathe. He goes, "We're all headed back from the hospital. He's fine. You just knocked him out."

This was a long time ago. The father is in this business where they jack up foundations on houses, that kind of thing. Well, I had a problem with a chimney about a year ago, and I decided to call him. His son runs the business now—the one I ran into. So out of the truck jumps this guy, probably six four, maybe 250, big sheepish grin. He says, "You Mr. Batton?" And I said, "I am. I ran into you a bunch of years ago—literal y." He goes, "Yup, no worries." And I go, "Do you remember anything about it?" He looks at me with a big grin and says, "The only thing I remember is the helicopter ride."

—AS TOLD TO MATT FINKELSTEIN

...To Play "Free Bird" for the Millionth Time

> BY GARY ROSSINGTON, 56, GUITARIST AND FOUNDING MEMBER, LYNRYD SKYNYRD

People ask me, "How do y'all play that song so much?" Well, part of our light show is pictures of the original band, put up during that song. I'll turn around and see Allen or Ronnie or somebody, and the feeling of them comes right through our music. We usually play it after "Sweet Home Alabama." We try to make it sound just like the album. The guitar solo lasts a long time. And then there's always some girls up front or people who lost loved ones, who are crying, and you see a lot of biker dudes coming up to show you their "Free Bird" tattoos while you're playing it.

We talk to a lot of military who play that song when they're going into battle, man. It's an honored song. For me to play it every night—each time is like the very first. Except I know it a little better. —AS TOLD TO LILY PERCY



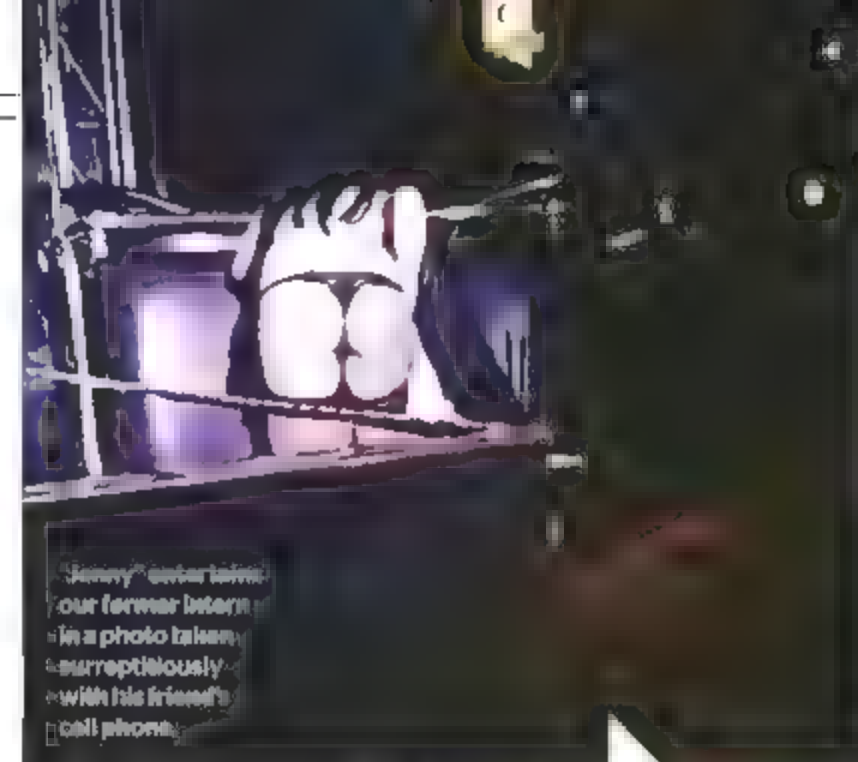
...To Play "Free Bird" for the Millionth Time

> BY CRIS SNYDER, 41, LEADER, NUTHIN' FANCY: A TRIBUTE TO LYNRYD SKYNYRD

By that point in the show, we've already played "Sweet Home Alabama," so they know it's the last song. It must be great to be Gary Rossington and be in an auditorium of eighty thousand people and have them singing your song back to you—we do it in front of a couple thousand and we all get pretty emotional. We re-create the exact solo from the live album. It doesn't get boring or repetitive, it actually goes by fast. Before you know it, we're doing the big dramatic ending. A lot of girls take off their shirts. Kids will sometimes start a mosh pit, and I'm thinking to myself, This is a Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute band. We're playing "Free Bird." What are you doing? But, personally, I'm honored to play the music. I actually had the opportunity to play with the original drummer, Bob Burns—he played on the "Free Bird" record. To be standing on stage next to him—I had to pinch myself. This was a guy who was instrumental in creating the song, and it's a piece of American history. It really is.

was there definitely changed my headspace. I felt that Scott was going to crush the field from the get-go. He's that good.
17 miles / -165 feet / 12:28 p.m.

The surface temperature of the road is around 200 degrees. You have to run on the white line on the road or your shoes start to kind of melt—they actually get



...To Get Your First Lap Dance

> BY MATT FINKELSTEIN, 23, ESQUIRE INTERN

My friends and I ordered a round of shots. Two women, a blond and a brunette, approached. "Double-trouble boobies for you?" the blond asked in a thick Russian accent. The brunette was tall and toothy; she exposed one of her nipples. But double trouble wasn't what I had in mind. Not for my first time.

After another drink, I spotted the one. Plump, perky breasts, long legs, and dark, shiny hair pulled back like she wasn't trying to hide her face. She sat on the arm of my chair, crossed her legs, put an arm around me, and began stroking my shoulder, all one graceful movement. We exchanged names (sort of—hers was fake). A few long moments passed in silence. Then she slid off the armrest, plopped into my lap, and said, "So have you had a dance yet?" We moved to a black leather bench adjacent to the stage. She smiled, dropped her top, and moved in close, putting one leg in between mine. In a way, it was like having sex for the first time—I had no idea what to do with my hands, no clue where to look. I remember the sweet smell of perfume and how everything else disappeared. I remember the silver charm dangling from her belly button and the small heart tattooed on her hip. I remember her butt in my face. It was somehow more embarrassing looking into her eyes than at her tits. When she said she was a Pisces like me, it didn't occur to me that it was just a way of pretending she might want to screw. "I think being a Pisces is why I'm so sensitive," she giggled. "Me, too," I said. God, I'm an idiot.

As the song ended, she pressed her thigh into my crotch and

...To Give Matt Finkelstein His First Lap Dance

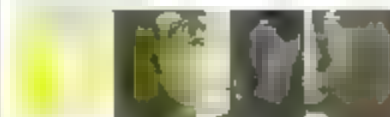
BY JENNY, 22, EXOTIC DANCER
AS TOLD TO MATT FINKELSTEIN

soft. Around the thirty-five-mile mark I came around a corner and I could see Scott up ahead, so I knew he must be slowing down, because I wasn't going any faster

42 miles / 0 feet / 4:16 p.m. The only good thing about a seventeen-mile five thousand-foot climb is that for every thousand feet you gain in elevation, the tem-

To Have Multiple Personalities

> BY CORAL HULL, ET AL., 42, WRITER, ARTIST



The following was taken from interviews and e-mail exchanges with Hull and her other selves.

I am one self who is co-conscious with a multitude of other selves. As one person, my name is Dr. Coral Hull. As a system, we are the Crystal Voyager System.

We have discovered between forty and fifty others. They are of both sexes—adults, children, other kin, and fragments. A lot could be written just on Celeste, a mermaid.

Sometimes the shifts are dramatic, such as when a business-oriented human adult is overcome by a fairy child who prefers to observe humans from behind trees. We've learned how to handle this, particularly when dealing with the more unconventional selves, who may act in socially inappropriate ways. We can't sniff at plates in restaurants or bare our teeth at people when we feel threatened.

I first became aware of the personalities in 2004. I remember hearing someone say, "Oh, my God! There are other people living in my body!" Then I heard what sounded like several internal thought dialogues whispering, "She knows." I lost consciousness for a number of weeks while an android named Witt took responsibility for the body Witt did funny things like call our mother and say, "Coral Hull no longer exists. My name is Witt."

Physical relationships are a challenge. Daniel is a male self in a female body. If Daniel happened to become conscious while one of us heterosexual women was involved with a male, he would panic. It probably seems like I'm complex, moody, and inconsistent, when the truth is that each one of us is simply being ourself. Raven is a shaman, whereas Jackie is wary of anything she considers to be new age and refers to people who believe in this as "a pack of crystal-danglers." Some of us drink Scotch and others don't drink at all. Each of us has come into being as naturally as you did. It's just that we happen to share one body.

Hi, I'm Bonnie. I'm human, at least I was the last time I looked. My interest is psychology, particularly criminal psychology, which I've studied for many years. I'm agnostic. There is very little that surprises me. Anyone, mental-health workers included, who thinks that they can dictate or impose their idea of reality and consciousness onto others, as fact, is deluded.

The others call me Cynthia, but I prefer Amelia. Bonnie is helping me write this. I am coming through her mind. I came into the body in 2005, just after some terrible things had happened. I do not know where I came from. I was just thinking last night how I would be afraid to have my own body. There would be no one to look after me, and I don't really understand your world and its ways.

Hello, my name is Daniel. I have often felt like I've failed to be a man and that I would have done better inside my own body. Then again, I am blessed to have existed at all. —AS TOLD TO NATALIE GHEIT

started moving it in circles to the beat. She put her hands on my neck and ran her fingers delicately down my body—over my chest, stomach, waist, thighs. I swear she grazed my penis for one millionth of a second. Then she stood, pouted a little, and said, "That's one dance," waving a lonely finger in the air. "Do you want another?"

You did fine! I was wondering why you were so concentrated. You seemed really focused, like you were on a mission. Most guys just stare everywhere. I just look for the guys that look like they have money. I'm not very good at telling yet.

...To Come in Second Place (Twice)

> BY FERG HAWKE, 50

0 miles / -282 feet elevation
10:00 a.m. I had finished second the year before. Coming back, I had trained so hard and then learning that Scott Jurek

was there definitely changed my headspace. I felt that Scott was going to crush the field from the get-go. He's that good.
17 miles / -165 feet / 12:28 p.m.

The surface temperature of the road is around 200 degrees. You have to run on the white line on the road or your shoes start to kind of melt—they actually get

soft. Around the thirty-five-mile mark I came around a corner and I could see Scott up ahead, so I knew he must be slowing down, because I wasn't going any faster

42 miles / 0 feet / 4:16 p.m. The only good thing about a seventeen-mile five thousand-foot climb is that for every thousand feet you gain in elevation, the tem-

perature drops five and a half degrees. It felt like it got down to maybe 110. That makes a difference. 59 miles / 4,956 feet; I was craving not having to climb anymore.

But after two miles of going downhill, I wished I wasn't running downhill anymore. Scott had bounced back, and he went by me like he was shot out of a cannon.



Jason Bareford, former world-record holder for the most consecutive kicks to one's own head in one minute. Opposite, current record holder Cody Warden, who broke Bareford's record with seventy-seven kicks in November 2006.

He yelled, "Hey, free speed, Ferg," meaning running downhill with gravity. I turned to the guy pacing me and said, "Nothing fucking free here, pal."

72 miles / 1,970 feet / 10:33 P.M. I was thinking: There is a possibility that I can win this race. That's pretty exciting at the halfway point. At the eighty-five-mile mark,

the other runner in the top three, Mike Sweeney, could barely string a sentence together. The medical team there diagnosed him with pulmonary edema, which is what

high altitude mountain climbers get when their lungs basically fill up with fluid. You can drown on the fluid that's piling into your lungs. It was probably down to 80 de-

... To Have Your Seemingly Safe World Record Broken

> BY JASON BAREFORD, 33, FILM PRODUCER

I saw some weird video clip where the previous record holder had done his shtick, and I thought it was kind of cool. I was like, "I could do this." I'd been a pro wrestler for a while, so I'm pretty flexible. So I tried it.

I broke the record September 3, 2005, in Tucson, Arizona. I thought that maybe it might help with women, but it didn't. It's such a ridiculous record, but it's just one of those things to do before you die. A couple of years later, I was on *Letterman*, doing it for "Stupid Human Tricks," and the new Guinness book came out the next day. That's when I found out somebody had broken the record. Some dude in Florida, I guess. Good for him. Maybe he's got better luck with the chicks than I do. But some dudes use both feet. You know, I think there should be two different records. If I used both feet, I could break ninety easy. I did fifty-seven with one foot. But to go back and try to do it again, it would be a hollow victory. I did it once—done. Now it's off to—I don't mean to be flip about it, but there's other things, other challenges. Look at the people on YouTube trying to break it. The record that I broke, the guy had forty-two. Now people have more or less adopted my style, which is one foot on the ground at all times, and now they're going to be like lions eating their

> Watch video clips of both of these renowned head-kickers at esquire.com/will108.

young trying to beat one another. But the guy I beat, I beat him by fifteen. And nobody's going to beat any record holder by double digits anytime soon.

—AS TOLD TO MATT FINKELSTEIN

... To Break Some Guy's Obscure World Record

BY CODY WARDEN, 17

I'd known I could kick myself in the head for a while, I just never really did it all that much. One day at school we were sitting in a TV-production class, just really bored, and one of my friends was like, "Hey, Cody can kick himself in the head!" And then they just gave me a quick time limit, and I just did it as fast as I could, and they were like, "Dude, you should do that for a world record."

It was down at our church. Two officials who hold standing in the community were required at the attempt, so I had the clerk of the court and our church pastor there. I had to be standing the entire time, and for one kick to count, the foot had to touch the floor and my head and back to the floor. I stand one-legged, bend over about halfway or so, and I jump and sling my leg

up and my head down at the same time. So that makes it just a little bit easier for me to get more kicks in.

I was entirely wore out. The first couple of times I tried it, I didn't exactly have total control over my foot. My ankle got away from me a few times. So for a week, there was, like, this huge knot on my forehead. After that my head was fine because I figured out how to hold my foot the right way. But my leg was just exhausted and sore the next day.

I sent the paperwork in, and it was about two or three months before I found out that it was accepted. It got me a job at McDonald's for a little while. I like to think: When I found out that they'd officially accepted it, it was, like, overwhelming joy, knowing that I'd done something that was, like, known around the world possibly.



grees, which felt cold. I got reports that Jurek was coming on strong. **90 miles / 5,050 feet / 2:32 A.M.** Underneath a big callus that had formed on the bottom of my foot

from training, the flesh was starting to tear away, and I was getting a blister about the size of a baseball. I put my foot up and my nurse started rooting around with a hy-

podermic needle, trying to find this layer of thick skin. But that was hurting more than the blister, so I said, "Let it go." And I carried on. I was losing toenails, too, just

from all of the pounding on the road. They would swell and loosen and then pop. They'd still remain on my foot, but they were raised up by about a quarter inch of fluid.

...To Race a Car Blind

> BY RYAN KNIGHTON, 35, WRITER

We came to Quebec's Granby Speedway to train for a race. In six weeks we would be surrounded by thirty-four other cars, all commandeered by visually impaired drivers—like me—with sighted navigators shouting directions from the passenger seats. The cars are tuned up and donated by a local junkyard. It's for charity.

For some reason the ashtray was full, so the car smelled like my great-grandmother's '82 Chevette. When I started the engine, everything rattled something awful. I thought about my one-year-old daughter. Next I pawed for the gearshift, pinching the air like a crab. Pasha caved to his frustration, or fear, and nudged my hand to the steering column. A breach of the rules already.

And we were off. Forget high-speed racing—I haven't broken from walking into a run in over ten years. Acceleration, when you're blind, is nearly impossible. My mind said go, but still my reflexes pulled my foot off the gas. Press and lift, we went. Press and lift. The reluctant part of me discovered the brake, and my feet dueled. I could sort of tell we were going fast because of the engine sound, but not seeing the speed at which things moved past us, I had no metric against which to measure the noise. You guys—sighty, as I call you all, affectionately—can measure speed using visual cues. But in a car, without much wind, you can't feel the velocity. After a while I got the clues down—the place of my foot on the gas that didn't elicit panic from Pasha, that specific engine sound.

My hands sweated something awful for the first three laps, and I felt the thrill of being in control. I also felt desperately out of control. It's a peculiar, backhanded paradox that way. When you're blind, you want to bump into things to know where you are. I'm terrified in empty parking lots or large rooms. I like walls, edges, stairs, things that give dimension.

Of course, for all I knew we were going five miles an hour in a straight line. Pasha did panic, at one point, about a tractor or something. I didn't quite catch that part.



Ryan Knighton in the racecourse, trying to drive.

To Be a Blind Race-Car Driver's Navigator

BY PASHA MALLA, 30, WRITER

As we crept forward, our lives in each other's hands—or mine in Ryan's hands, and his life in my eyes—reminded me that he hadn't been behind the wheel in seventeen years. Almost immediately the car began to veer left. "We're on a straight-away," I said. "Just go straight." That wasn't going to work. "What's straight?" he asked. I tried military tactics: "Think twelve o'clock." But Ryan hadn't seen a clock in over a decade.

Meanwhile we were heading straight for the median. I grabbed the wheel myself, yanking us back into the middle of the track. I'd broken a cardinal rule and, approaching our first turn, I settled back into my role as navigator. The speedometer climbed to fifteen miles per hour. Once we were around the first bend, we began to establish better communication. A calm "left" suggested a gentle turn, while "LEFTLEFTLEFT!" meant we were inches from hitting a damned tractor inexplicably parked in the infield. "Stop," regardless of how calmly I said it, resulted in Ryan slamming on the brakes as violently as possible, often giggling.

Afterward, Ryan took me to a field, blindfolded me, and told me to sprint. Try this. The feeling of hurtling through space, relying on someone else's assurances that you're not going to hit anything, is nearly impossible to do.

> Watch a video of Knighton and Malla driving a practice run at esquire.com/wif08.

ended up losing eight nails. So that was starting to be a bit of an issue. Just past the hundred-mile mark, you can see Mount Whitney. It looks like it's about two states over

And you see this ugly "Z" going up the side of the mountain—that's the road you have to run up. You run toward it for an hour and a half, and it doesn't seem to be getting

any closer. Every cell in your body is telling you to stop. It was like I was on this big hideous treadmill. **122 miles / 3,610 feet / 8:57 A.M.** Blood was starting to flow through

...To Go on a First Date with Leah Aron

> BY BEN HIEGER, 33, WRITER

All I knew ahead of time was that she was a dancer, drank whiskey, and ate meat. I picked a relaxed restaurant in her neighborhood with the kind of vibe and lighting that makes everyone 10 percent more attractive. I was early. She tapped me on the back and I turned around—and was it instant fireworks? No, but I could tell this would be a good date. There were two blonds next to us who caught my eye, but Leah could crap more style than either of them.

I didn't tell the restaurant it was a first date or anything, but they sat us at a great table by the door—good people watching. We both ordered steak frites and Maker's Manhattan. She asked me "my story" so she could use the time to try tongue-tying our cherry stems (failed every time, but it was a PG-rated turn-on), and I asked about the track marks on her arm. There's not a lot that freaks me out—if she'd had a dick, that would have freaked me out, but not heroin. She told me she was four years off the junk (hey, hey!), and assured me that *Transpotting* was spot-on. Our waitress sat down to chat, and at one point I spooned an à la mode dessert (PG-13 turn-on). We ended the evening with an Old No. 7 nightcap at a weird dive bar down the block, and a promise to do it all over again. And the rest, as they say, is history.

my shoes. I still hadn't ruled out winning the race. I was still charging as hard as I could. But I was bent over—I looked like Groucho Marx going up that hill

...To Go on a First Date with Ben Hieger

> BY LEAH ARON, 30, ARTIST

Ben was at the bar when I arrived. He asked if I wanted to sit there or get a table. I said, "Let's get a table." I was expecting a good booth, like he had slickly arranged for it before I got there, but we ended up at a tiny table next to the door. It was actually kinda cozy. The fact that upon closer inspection the stripes on his shirt were a flower print was a bit of a turnoff. I was relieved that he had decided against his initial date ideas, which seemed ambitious but not particularly exciting—the Staten Island Ferry, a carousel, brunch.

I tried to tie the cherry stem from my drink into a knot in my mouth while he talked. I knew I was able to do it but was too nervous to pull it off. I recommended the steak. We ordered from the cute waitress, with whom Ben and I both flirted. I told Ben I was a libertarian. He asked if that was like a libertine. I said no, but I admitted to being a libertine as well. My explanation of libertarianism was pathetic—I just referenced Camille Paglia and said "like" too much. I tried to look interested as Ben talked about leaving advertising to write a novel, a vacation to Ireland, the various cities he's lived in. He talked about shopping for his niece, who is thirteen, at Hollister and not being able to keep his eyes off the tween salesgirl's tits. That was when I knew there would be no second date—it wasn't shocking, but the way he said it was an irreversible turnoff. I used a quarter of the amount of au poivre sauce that I would normally use. In the name of being ladylike.

Afterward, we walked by a good bar. He peered in the windows enthusiastically, like a tourist. Inside, he ordered two Jack Daniels, which was fine with me. We had been hanging out for four and a half hours. He walked me home and we had a nice hug. Halfway up the stairs to my apartment, I got a text from Ben. He wrote that he wanted to do it again. I don't know if he was going through the motions like I was, if we both felt pressure to hit it off. The whole thing wasn't unpleasant, but I don't plan on going out with him again.

135 miles / 8,360 feet / 12:33 P.M. The first thing I did when I finished was drink an ice-cold Molson Canadian. That's what I was thinking about the last twenty miles



...To Crash a Plane into a House

> BY CHARLES REECE, 70, RETIRED BROKER

It was a beautiful day. Unlimited visibility. I was on the final approach to the Compton Airport when I lost an engine. When you're flying a twin-engine plane, you've got a power plant on each wing. When one fails, the plane's going to favor the other wing—the plane started to yaw toward the good engine. It feels like you're being pulled to one side. So the first thing you do is bring up power on the good engine and stabilize the plane.

I wasn't worried at this point, because I'm trained to fly this plane on one engine. I've been flying for forty-seven years. I went through the normal procedure at that altitude, which was about seven hundred feet. I retracted the landing gear. But bear in mind when you lose an engine and you're at a low altitude, the plane's automatically going to lose altitude. At this point I'm too low and too slow, but I'm thinking, Don't give up the airplane. Don't panic. Put it down as safe as you can and walk away. Minimize the

damage on the ground. Save my life and my passengers.

The world didn't pass before my eyes. I didn't think of being afraid. But we're at the point where the plane was going so low and so slow that we had to give it up. I mean, the plane was going to crash. I knew that. I did what I had to do to minimize the forward motion. I wanted to pick the nose up so the plane would fall on the tail and minimize the crash damage.

Unfortunately, the houses were there. There's no way I could maneuver the plane away from that. By the time it came in touch with the ground, we were probably doing twenty miles an hour. When the plane rolled over, it went nose down through the top of the house and into that woman's kitchen. I didn't see anything—when it

and the debris from the ceiling, I guess. A few minutes after, I can't see anything, but I can hear people talking and running around—you know how when somebody's walking on glass and debris and stuff, that crunching sound? But I still couldn't put it together. I didn't know what was going on. The sound was real muffled. It was the sensation of a dream, almost. I couldn't see because my eyes were filled with liquid—the blood running down my face. I woke up and tried to say, "What happened?" I couldn't get my mouth to work. My lip was split in two places, separated from my mouth. It felt like it was, just flapping. In the ER, I wake up and they're sewing my lip together. I see them shooting me with all these needles. I have nineteen staples in my head now—and I say, "What happened?" And somebody finally goes, "You were hit by a plane." And I'm going, What the ?!?

started to go down, I had no more control over it, so I covered my head. —AS TOLD TO NICOLE TOURTELOT

...To Have a Plane Land on Your House

> BY DARRYL IRVIN, 49, MORTGAGE-LOAN COUNSELOR

I was sitting down having some turkey tacos for lunch, watching *The Matrix*. It was the third one, when the machines are out to get them. I looked at Regina, my girlfriend—it was her house—and quoted one of the lines, which I know verbatim, and we laughed, and then I looked back at the TV. Then I heard something like sputtering—this is the airport area, so you hear that all the time. But then—*bang*. Everything went black for a minute. It must have knocked me unconscious, because I didn't feel anything. Regina had been thrown from the house. I was under the plane

and the debris from the ceiling, I guess. A few minutes after, I can't see anything, but I can hear people talking and running around—you know how when somebody's walking on glass and debris and stuff, that crunching sound? But I still couldn't put it together. I didn't know what was going on. The sound was real muffled. It was the sensation of a dream, almost. I couldn't see because my eyes were filled with liquid—the blood running down my face. I woke up and tried to say, "What happened?" I couldn't get my mouth to work. My lip was split in two places, separated from my mouth. It felt like it was, just flapping. In the ER, I wake up and they're sewing my lip together. I see them shooting me with all these needles. I have nineteen staples in my head now—and I say, "What happened?" And somebody finally goes, "You were hit by a plane." And I'm going, What the ?!?

to knock an hour off my previous time. Badwater is about a lot more than who finished first and who finished second. —AS TOLD TO MATT FINKELSTEIN



May 2005 to May 2006:

After months of gathering intelligence, paying off inmates, and gaining the trust of the guards, the inmates move into the cell, or "house," as they call it: one of just two rooms from which a tunnel escape would be feasible.

Each room is shaken down at least once a month, sometimes more. They meticulously hide their tools, just as they would weapons or drugs.

Perched on his bunk, Spooner serves as the lookout for the tunnel work. Standing by the door and peeking through the window, digging would bring immediate suspicion.

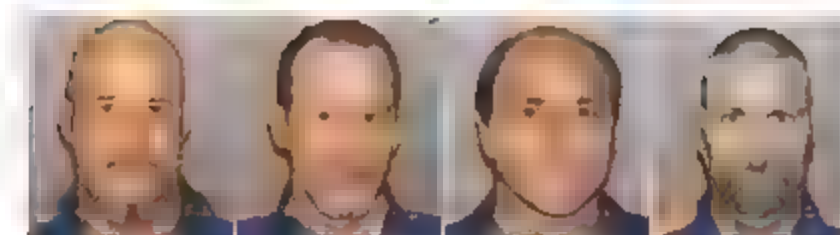


January 1, 2007: Just after midnight, Hoffman sucks in his breath, squeezes through the tiny opening, and drops into the hole for the last time.

May to December 2006: They buy barbed wire and steal tools. They try, and fail, to break through the seven inches of concrete. Finally, smashing the floor with a hundred-pound weight, drawing the attention of other inmates.

Late December 2006: A metal conduit pipe with electrical wires runs through the middle of the hole. Hoffman saws it through, and Shavkey re-wires it using an extension cord. Murphy disconnects the gear running the brief power outage.

THE TUNNEL



Every man yearns to be free. None more so than the man in prison. And at Kinross prison in Michigan, Hoffman and Murphy had an idea.

BY BRIAN MOCKENHAUPT

ILLUSTRATION BY BRYAN CHRISTIE DESIGN

The smell changed from stale to sweet. That's when he knew they'd made it. For weeks he'd sucked in musty, dead air. Now he smelled life, walking home from school after a heavy rain, watching half-drowned worms squirm on the sidewalk, the smell of the world growing. He wriggled and shifted and rolled onto his back, in a pocket no bigger than a pine-box coffin. He lifted the cereal bowl and

scraped the tunnel ceiling. Dirt poured down, cascading off his face, falling into his ears. He raised the bowl again, loosed another shower of dirt, and in the pale light of his fluorescent work lamp, Joe Hoffman saw something beautiful: grass roots. ¶ He stopped digging and stared at the roots. So close now. He could break through in minutes and just go, right then, free after fifteen years. But impulsiveness had no place here. For two years they had connived and calculated with precision and care. Stick to the plan. In the tunnel, Murphy would leave behind a notebook with the addresses of pen pals in ten countries, ten false starts for the investigation. Within days they'd be off Michigan's Upper Peninsula and in their Canadian safe house, before heading south to Costa Rica, a fine place to disappear. Some sun. Some sand. Some beer. And topping Hoffman's list for postprison life: a soft, thick mattress. Wedged into the tunnel, his body stiff and bruised from all-night shifts of digging, he fantasized about the bed he'd buy. That would be freedom. ¶ In the cell, guards would find four empty bunks, pillows and clothes piled under blankets. They'd look at the hole and wonder. They'd throw all the clues on the table, with hindsight casting the innocuous in a new light. The loud

Above, from left to right: Joe Hoffman, Tim Murphy, Michael Shavkey, and Michael Spooner



Built as Air Force barracks during the cold war, the three-story housing units are more dormitory than cell block, and not nearly as tunnel-proof as the state's newer prisons. The eastern end of Easy Unit, left, is very near the fences. At right, the hole where Murphy and Hoffman broke through the floor.



and Hoffman treated each other as brothers. No doubts there. But they needed a third for the escape.² Murphy had known Welky for a year and figured him for a guy who could keep a secret, an old school convict. Twenty years into a life sentence for murder, he had been at Kinross for years, and he already lived in Easy Unit, giving him critical knowledge of inmates and staff personalities, schedules, friends.

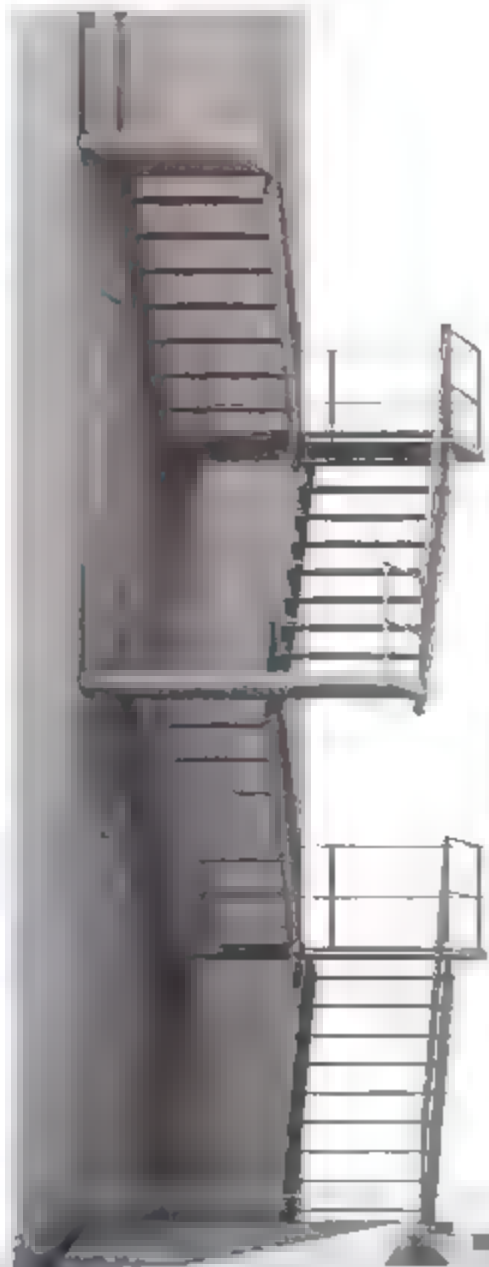
Murphy pulled Welky aside in the yard.

"I've been working on a plan to get out of here," Murphy said. He told him little of the plan, except that they'd have a several-hour head start.

Hoffman watched from across the yard, gauging Welky's reaction.

"You have to go with your instincts, Don. What are they telling you?"

The inmates store the sandbags in the wall lockers during digging operations then pack them back into the tunnel by morning, so the room is a mess after each night's work. The crew scrubs the walls, bunks, and lockers; sweeps and mops the floor then showers.



Mid-January 2007: A section of the tunnel ceiling collapses near the foundation wall, dropping several pounds of dirt onto Hoffman, the first of many cave-ins.

"Can I think about it?" Welky said.

"Sleep on it, and we'll talk."

He came back several days later "I'm in," he said. He met Hoffman, and the three sat on a bench in the yard, where Hoffman laid out the plan, moving into one of the eastern rooms and digging through the floor in the gap between the two bunk beds.³

Welky established the beachhead, moving into the northeast ground-floor cell of Easy Unit, but before Hoffman or Murphy could move, the prison brought in four hundred more inmates, adding another to each cell. Now they had to find a fourth partner and convince three inmates to leave, the first in an exhausting series of setbacks.

Prisoners can move between rooms once every six months, so long as they've been free of misconduct during that time and everyone in both cells agrees to the move, along with the unit supervisor. This is pragmatism brought on by experience. Stick four dudes who can't stand one another in a tiny room and see what happens. Same with the vocational classes, sports programs, and satellite TV. Corrections officers hear how people bitch. You let them lift weights, then put those jacked-up thugs back on the streets. Why should they get cable TV when I can't afford it? Things is, they pay for it with profits from the prison store, where they buy toiletries, snacks, writing materials, and televisions on a debit system. And all those perks protect both guards and inmates. Bad things happen with 1,750 guys staring at four walls all day. Kinross averages nearly three reported incidents of violence per month. If lifting weights, watching the History Channel, or learning car repair keeps them happy, reduces some stress, then great, because the guards have enough to worry about. They're not zookeepers, sliding food into cages. They're unarmed beat cops in a small and very dangerous town packed with cliques, gangs, and power brokers, running rackets, moving drugs, and plotting assassinations. A good officer can feel the mood shift before trouble starts, the yard or chow hall too quiet, inmates avoiding eye contact. But intuition alone can't keep order. For that he needs information, always talking with the inmates and building relationships with a few who might offer a heads up.

Guards needed information, and Murphy fed them, hiding homemade wine around the prison and muttering tips to the Easy Unit supervisor. With his credibility established, the crew cemented the relationship by stashing several shanks in another building. Heard some guys talking about killing an officer, Murphy told the supervisor, and I know where they hid the weapons.

Distance between room and first fence: 21 feet

January to March 2007: Hoffman serves as the designated digger. Spooner can't fit through the hole. Shawkey is too claustrophobic. So is Murphy—after his sister locked him in a toy box as a boy—but he serves time in the tunnel, unloading and loading the bags.

With hundreds of bags of dirt packed into the tunnel. It takes three hours just to unload them for a night's digging. By the end, a full digging shift lasts eight to ten hours.

2. "Our choice had to be right. We couldn't run around asking everyone if they wanted to escape from prison. Although the most important prison code is to not rat, it appears to be a rather prevalent practice among many prisoners these days. We had to worry as much, if not more, about the prisoners as we did the staff." —Murphy

3. "I'll never forget the look on Don's face when Joe told him it was a tunnel from the end of Easy Unit. It was like someone had just told him the meaning of life." —Murphy

Officers know prisoners want something when they snitch. Why else would they violate such a sacred and brutally enforced code? But protecting an officer in exchange for an inmate moving in with his buddy? That's a good trade, the mutual manipulation that maintains order.

Murphy just had that way about him. People believed him, trusted him, and he honed that skill, using it to navigate the prison landscape for nearly two decades. This was his protection, being one who could get things done for others. At five foot five and 140 pounds, Murphy wasn't built for prison, a society ruled by testosterone, posturing, and the constant threat of violence, implied and delivered. In the early years, he was punched and kicked and cracked in the face with a lantern battery dropped into a sock, breaking his cheekbone and knocking him unconscious. Sounded like a melon cracking open. He knows this because he heard it happen to others.⁴ He saw people stabbed to death and heard them being raped. Buck or fuck. Your choice. And if you don't fight, you're done, giving blowjobs for protection, rented out

to other inmates, traded or sold, forever a punk.

The guys who get by in prison lose themselves in something—hobbies, religion, exercise. Murphy found heroin and loved the escape, until an old convict and longtime addict warned him off. "You'll never get that high again," he told him. "You'll chase it for the rest of your life." He replaced smack with the library and became something of a jailhouse lawyer, known for his skills at preparing legal briefs, his understanding of the law and prisoners' rights, and his willingness to help other inmates.

Prisons abound with tales of single, pivotal choices, like reaching for the glass pitcher in a bar fight. But Murphy's unraveling spread over years, fueled by hard luck and a complete inability to make good decisions. Let's start with his father, who slapped his mother and saved the rest

for his sister. From his father, Murphy learned lessons like this: Driving up north from their home in Saginaw for snowmobiling, they passed a trailer with a flat tire and two new snowmobiles parked on top. The owner must have

4. "In prison, knowing when to duck is often very valuable information. . . I've been able to avoid a lot of violence over the years. I don't know if you'd call it being manipulative, but I know how to handle myself. You have to be mighty observant. I watch, I see what goes on. You learn to go with the flow. You listen. It's a survival skill you develop. A lot of people don't do it very well. They end up being prey or predator." —Murphy



March 24, 2007: The tunnel as seen from outside

February 2007: An officer finds cigarettes in Murphy's pocket during a random shake-down outside the room, a violation of the smoking agreement and an automatic move. Murphy plays misfit, using the goodwill engendered by his snitching. Remember the wine the shanks? They let him stay but that won't work again. No more mistakes so near the end.

Second fence: Roving patrols pass by every few minutes. They wait for their window security from the hole in the cover with cardboard wrapped in a white sheet, blending with the snow. By the time the next guard passes, they will be across the field and in the trees.

Mid-February: The halfway point. Hoffman reaches the first fence, two or one foot out of the hole, with his cereal bowl and wonders. The just triggered the prison's motion and vibration sensors.

March 17, 2007: The tunnel is finished, but they haven't found a getaway route. The escape is delayed one week.

Total distance: 40 feet

gone to town for a spare. Well, his father figured, We have room on our trailer, so we'll just help ourselves to a snowmobile. If you need something, take it, and even if you don't, take it anyway. Who's going to stop you?

The stealing, of which Murphy had done plenty, brought short prison stints. But the real trouble came later, with arrests for drugs and indecent exposure—dancing naked on a beer-tent table the first time. He moved into an apartment building, bought a telescope, and watched his neighbors, which led to a Peeping Tom arrest in March 1990. In his trunk, police found a picture frame reported stolen by a woman who'd been raped while her children slept in a nearby room. Murphy said he'd been with his girlfriend at the time, and that he'd found the frame in the dumpster behind the convenience store where he worked. Blood, saliva, and DNA samples identified him as the probable rapist. Murphy said he didn't do it; the jury said he did, and the judge sentenced him to four life terms and several more decades for breaking and entering and robbery.

Facing that sort of time shifts a man's reasoning from the mathematical to the existential. A guy serving a dime counts the years; doing a month, he counts the days. But the lifer confronts the sublime, a reality so stupefying, it spins many men into insanity or rewires their brains so thoroughly that they know nothing else, expect nothing else, and even embrace life inside. Institutionalized, they call it. Some lifers can be paroled in Michigan, but that hardly ever happens these days. For everyone they know on the outside—wives, mothers, brothers, sons—life will

5. "Do you want to know what prison is really like? I don't mean the bars, bunks, or bathrooms, but the actual life lived inside? It's a place filled with pain, hate, treachery, all mixed together and simmering in the slow hellfire of stress, fear, and longing. It's a place where grown men silently cry in their sleep and desperately fight to hold on to their sanity, hope, and dreams. Prison is a cold, harsh reality that for many people holds special terrors. Perhaps the most important prison life lesson is that all too often kindness can be mistaken for weakness. Prison is a place where mind games are endless and screwing with the minds and emotions of others is a sport. In short, it's hell, a place of torment, a madhouse where nothing makes sense, a void where nothing matters except survival and freedom." —Murphy

go on, and they will grow tired of visiting, they will move away, and they will die. But inside, the daily schedule never changes: Physical and psychological survival, just like yesterday and just like tomorrow.⁵

"I need the room," Eight Ball said. "I'm going to bring my boy in here."

"Like hell you are," Murphy said.

Eight Ball sometimes snuck his boyfriend into the showers, and that was his business. But not in the room. No way. Sex wasn't even the problem, though, much as that annoyed Murphy. Eight Ball just had to go. The escape hinged on it.

Murphy had moved into the southeast room early in 2005, then brought in Welky from across the hall after his cell mates refused to leave, even with the promise of \$300—a fortune when most prison jobs pay as little as \$1 per day. Welky took a job as the unit clerk, building the crew's influence, but progress stalled with the other two cell mates, particularly Eight Ball, small, brash, and increasingly comfortable in the room. They had worked him for weeks, reasoning and bribing. He had agreed to leave when his six-month window opened in February, but he reconsidered, and civility faded to hostility.

Hoffman snapped. From his second-story cell in a nearby unit, he'd spent months at his window, gazing down at Easy Unit and the target room. Cajoling Eight Ball had taken too long, and they'd already spent hundreds of dollars arranging moves.

He confronted him in the chow hall.

"I hear you're refusing to move," he said.

"I'm dug in. I'm getting my boy in there, and that's that."

"Before that happens, me and you will both end up in the hole."

Eight Ball walked outside. Hoffman followed.

"You gave us your word," he said.

"I don't give a fuck about Tim, Don, or you."

He threw a palm into Hoffman's chest. Hoffman shoved him back. Eight Ball slipped a shank from his waistband and swung. Hoffman caught his wrist and pushed him against the trash compactor. He pulled a sharpened metal strip from his boot and pressed it to Eight Ball's throat.

A dozen of Hoffman's friends crowded around.

"I'm not going to force you to move. That's your choice," Hoffman said. "But we spent a lot of money based on your word."

Never mind for a minute that Hoffman had six inches and seventy-five pounds on him. Never mind the blade at his throat. What he saw in Hoffman's face told him this had gone too far.

Eight Ball nodded. "I'll move."

Scaring someone into submission, breaking his will. Just another skill you can pick up in prison. Sometimes you're bluffing, sometimes not. Hoffman learned that lesson years ago after he borrowed money from a member of a prison gang, giving his radio as collateral. He repaid the loan—at the typical 2.1 rate—but the inmate refused to return the radio. Once a guy rolls over, it'll never stop. Labels stick. Hoffman bulked up through the years, using the weight pit to pack nearly two hundred pounds onto a five-nine frame, but early on he was a scared, skinny white kid. Maybe this moment would decide how bearable his life would be. He dropped four D-cell batteries into a laundry bag and wound it tight. He snuck up on the inmate in the stairwell, swung the sack like a hammer, and smashed his head. They threw him in the hole, but he figured it worth the price. Inmates called him Duracell after that. Some still do.

Violence hadn't really been his style. He stole cars and broke into houses around Detroit because he had no interest in working for the money. Doing right just hadn't entered his head, and stealing was a rush, flushed with adrenaline, dreaming of the big score. First bank job, he and his girl rolled naked in the money.⁶ Past midnight on March 2, 1992, Hoffman pulled up his junky Ford Escort behind a bank in Howell, Michigan. He punched through the bank's brick wall with a twenty-pound sledgehammer, crawled through the hole with a paper sack and a pistol, and waited for the workday. As the staff arrived, he herded them into a back room and tied two with duct tape. Two others he marched to the vault, where he stuffed \$47,000 into his bag. He tried to leave through the back door, which was locked, so he crawled back through the wall and fled. A week later, police acting on a tip searched his house and found marked money.

The sentencing guidelines ranged from a minimum of five to twenty-five years. The judge gave him twenty-five, plus another two for carrying a gun as a felon. James Buttrey, Hoffman's lawyer, suggested that some murderers had received shorter bits. "I would ask the court to impose a sentence that gives him some light at the end of the tunnel," Buttrey said.

"Mr. Hoffman," Judge Daniel Burrell said, "anything you'd like to say?"

"Yeah. I'd just like to say I didn't hurt anybody and in my whole past criminal record I've never hurt any-

6. "The money was good but the lifestyle better. Within six months, we had fake IDs, our own apartment, and a car in the driveway. But greed is a compelling emotion, always wanting more. Trouble was on the horizon when my adolescent fantasies of Jesse James bank robberies collided with my adulthood delusions of getting away with them." —Hoffman

one and I... that's it."

"Okay," Burrell said. "I'm going to deny the motion for resentencing."

Hoffman started his twenty-seven-year gig, carrying that chip. By the time he met Murphy, he figured he'd done his time, and if the state wouldn't release him, he'd release himself.

They found another room for Eight Ball, and Murphy helped arrange Hoffman's move. Just one more to go. As their fourth, Welky suggested his friend Michael Shavkey, serving life without parole for kidnapping, rape, and murder. Reserved and nervous, with a high-pitched voice that earned him the nickname Squeaky, he worked as a bookkeeper in the prison garment factory. Hoffman and Murphy didn't much like his crime—raping and strangling his ex-girlfriend—but his meek nature and respectable job would deflect suspicion from the crew. Officers shook down each cell at least once a month, sometimes more. With four older prisoners just keeping quiet, doing their time, maybe they'd be less thorough.

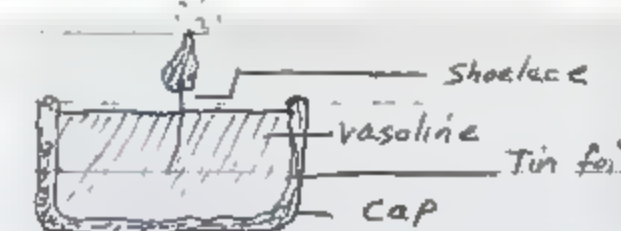
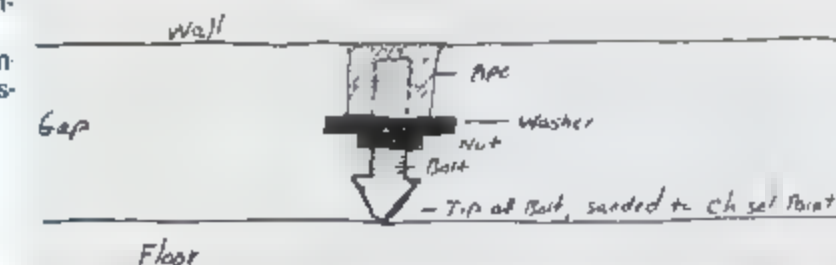
The Murphy-Welky snitch-clerk duo greased the wheels. Phase One had taken a full year, but they were all in the room.

They celebrated with this bit of bad news: Easy Unit had become tobacco-free.

All but Shavkey smoked.



The tools: Hoffman was inventive, fashioning found objects into implements of escape. Left, the manual hand drill he made out of a chair leg. Right, the "chiseled bar spreader."



"Fire and ice": The idea was to get the floor hot, and then cool it off, hoping that the rapid change in temperature would crack the cement. Above, Hoffman's candle. Sketches by Joe Hoffman.

Hoffman slid the clothes from across the six floor tiles between the bunk beds, prying them loose with a metal bar pulled from his typewriter, working it like a spatula.⁷ From his bed, Welky peered through the door's narrow window, keeping watch on the hallway. Murphy sat in the dayroom, seven doors down, with John Marble, the third-shift officer in Easy Unit. He built the friendship with Marble over many weeks, spending an hour or more each night watching TV and discussing the Bible and politics. A veteran corrections officer a few years from retirement, Marble knew inmates' tricks and rackets. He'd seen a lifetime's worth of fights and stabings and enjoyed the quiet hours of third shift, watching the news, talking to the few inmates awake during the deep of night.

Their early-warning system in place, Hoffman worked without interruption.⁸ He glued together six replacement tiles, purchased months earlier, making a solid cover to quickly hide their work. For the next several nights they tugged at an inch-wide tar strip between the wall and the floor, finally exposing a gap. They measured the floor. Seven inches, no doubt reinforced with steel rebar.

For supplies, they tapped the prison economy and relationships they'd built with prisoner maintenance crews, vetted through hours of observation and cryptic interviews. Availability is rarely the problem. Most anything can be had, usually bartered with a mix of food and toiletries. But will the inmate tell anyone? Every transaction created one more loose end, an unavoidable risk. Usually it came down to a gut feeling and a gamble, masked by a

7. "For thirteen years, I had used this machine to prepare legal briefs to appeal my conviction and it failed in its intended use. Maybe now it would redeem itself." —Hoffman

few lies for obfuscation.

They bought a masonry drill bit for a hundred dollars and fashioned a hand drill from a chair leg, but weeks of drilling several hours a night accomplished little. Several pinkie sized holes now dimpled the floor near the wall. Using a twenty-five-pound weight as a hammer, they drove sharpened bolts into the holes, chipping off small pieces of concrete. The gap grew to four inches, but the bolts broke. Using a nut, a bolt, and a pipe, Hoffman designed a rudimentary jack and slipped it between the wall and floor. Each turn of the nut drove the pointed bolt into the concrete. That gave them just a quarter inch. With the clothes iron, a home-made candle, and snow from the window ledge, they tried to re-create the effect of a sidewalk buckling in freezing and warming temperatures. They called it fire and ice. Nothing. They needed a sledgehammer.

What they got was disaster. Years earlier, when prison had been dark and hate-filled for Murphy, he met a woman named Jessica Harris through a pen-pal club. She had

lived a damaged life herself until she found Jesus, so without knowing Murphy, she already knew him, and figured he needed a friend. Just something I need to do, she told her husband. They corresponded six years, trading hundreds of letters, and in August 2006, she flew to Kinross for several days. They talked for hours in the visiting room, and Jessica bought him sodas and snacks. They had their picture taken in front of a tropical beach scene painted on a wall, Murphy wearing his one set of civilian clothes, allowed during visits. On her last day at Kinross, Jessica left the prison and walked along the road near Easy Unit. She saw Murphy on the blacktop and waved. Murphy waved back, and officers sprung, figuring she might be tossing him drugs. They searched Murphy—lift your tongue, spread your cheeks—hailed him to segregation and sent a team to shake down the cell. All night he waited for the other three to join him in the hole. Surely the weight, the tile cover, and the tools had been discovered. But by morning, still nothing.

Murphy sat in the hole for forty-five days and tunnel work stopped, with a new prisoner in the cell. Then officers caught Welky smoking and kicked him out of Easy Unit. Welky gave up, taking the setbacks as a sign. Another randomly assigned inmate moved into the room, and Relentless Freedom teetered near failure.

From segregation, Murphy moved to G Unit. With the disciplinary action, he wouldn't be eligible for a room move

for six months. He complained of back pain, which necessitated a first-floor room assignment, and requested nonsmoking. In early November, they paid the new inmate to rescind his tobacco agreement and Murphy returned. For their new fourth they brought on Shavkey's friend Michael Spooner, doing life for murder. He told everybody that he had killed an off-duty cop. And that sounds better, a little more macho, than breaking into an old man's house, robbing him, beating him, and slitting his throat

The crew gathered on the blacktop in early December, drawn outside by a rare warm day in the Upper Peninsula. Work had resumed with Murphy back in the room, but they had made no progress, while the danger level ratcheted higher by the day. Someone would put it together. Inmates had already been asking about the odd noises.

"The weight isn't working," Shavkey said. "We've tried everything."

A month earlier they had snuck a fifty-pound plate from the weight pit and told the floor officer they'd be shining their floor with the buffing machine. While Murphy peeked through the window, Hoffman slammed the weight into the floor. Twelve times in two hours, until a guard moved down the hall, looking in each room. Murphy slid the weight behind a false wall they'd built under a wall locker, then started the buffing machine.

"Dropped the table," Hoffman told the guard.

They slowed the pace, hitting the floor once a day, when the first-floor inmates left for lunch. Spooner and Shavkey served as lookouts from the bathroom—three doors down, on the other side of the hallway—running the hand dryer to mute the noise.

But the floor wouldn't give, and other prisoners had noticed the banging. An inmate from the room above theirs stopped Murphy in the chow hall. "What the hell are you

Once the hole was discovered, the magnitude of the project quickly became clear.



He walked back to the room wondering if he could even carry that much weight from the pit to Easy Unit, two football fields away.

Hoffman slipped on an X-shaped harness—two nylon belts sewn together with dental floss—and a winter coat borrowed from a much bigger inmate. The four walked to the weight pit, scouting the guards' locations. Hoffman lay down on the sit-up bench, the hundred-pound plate across his chest, ready to exercise. The pit guard turned away.

"Go ahead," Murphy said. "Hurry."

Hoffman poked the retaining bolt through the plate.

"Hold up!" Murphy said. "A guard's coming."

Fear shot through Hoffman. The harness, considered contraband, would get him at least thirty days in the hole, even if officers didn't realize its purpose.

"False alarm," Murphy said. "Just changing shifts."

Hoffman zipped the coat and struggled to his feet. Shavkey, Spooner, and Murphy blocked the view of guards and other inmates. The weight wrenched his back and neck. He staggered. His legs burned. He forced each step, focusing on the normal rhythms of walking.⁹

"You look pretty obvious with that," a friend said as Hoffman passed.

"Typewriter," Hoffman said. Plausible, since appliances aren't allowed out side, but whatever he carried didn't weigh five pounds. The inmate shrugged.

They marched on, down the sidewalk toward Easy Unit. Murphy slipped into the hallway, checking for guards. All clear. Hoffman lurched into the room and collapsed in the chair.

As second floor left for lunch, Hoffman muscled the plate above his head and slammed it into the floor. Nothing. But a dozen hits and six days later, the floor cracked into two pieces, a half-circle ten inches deep and eighteen inches wide. Squeezing through would be difficult, but the size offered less chance of detection.

Hours later, well past midnight, Hoffman worked the hacksaw blade against the rebar that ran through the two concrete chunks, his knuckles scraped raw by the cement.

Murphy had returned to the room a few minutes earlier, leaving Marble in the dayroom. Conversations with Murphy had become a regular part of Marble's nights, and if Murphy wasn't around, he would sometimes come looking. Like now.

"Marble's coming!" Spooner hissed.

⁹ "I felt sick. Sweating profusely. Breathing hard but not getting enough oxygen. I saw myself fall to the ground, surrounded by guards finding the weight... handcuffed, shackled, thrown in the hole. A bad premonition. Keep moving. Got to make it." Hoffman

Hoffman's stomach clenched. He turned off the work lamp and fumbled with the tools, sliding them under the bed. He tried to shove the tile panel across the hole. Marble unlocked the door, stepped into the darkened room, and shined his light on Hoffman, crouched between the beds.

"What are you doing?"

"My cable went out," he said, fiddling with the wall receptacle.

"Why are you in the dark?"

"Lights out after midnight. Just following the rules."

If Marble's flashlight beam fell another two feet, they'd be done.

"Here's your problem," Murphy said, holding up the cable end.

"Must have yanked it out when I cleaned the shelf earlier," Hoffman said.

Marble walked out. The tension and anxiety stayed.

"I only left him for a minute," Murphy said.

"Well you shouldn't have," Spooner said.

"Fuck you."

They closed in on each other. Hoffman slid between them.

"Are you crazy? You trying to get caught? Both of you are serving life bits. Your fight should be to get out of here."

The next night they pried out the two chunks of concrete, exposing a bed of sand.¹⁰ But within the first few inches of digging, they hit another snag: A metal conduit pipe, holding electrical wires, ran across the middle of the hole, a few inches from the wall. They'd never squeeze past that.

But they could rewire it. Shavkey stripped the ends of an extension cord, and Hoffman sawed out a two-foot section of pipe, exposing the wire. Murphy moved to the dayroom to distract Marble once the power went out. Spooner watched the window. Hoffman cut the wire, tripping the breaker. A few minutes later an inmate told Marble that his lights had gone out. Murphy delayed him with more conversation, and by then Shavkey had finished. Marble reset the breaker and juice flowed through the bypass. Digging resumed.

Hoffman stood guard at the bathroom door as Murphy sprinkled sand into the shower. The water circled and swirled, pulling the dirt down the drain. They had made this trip a dozen times already, sneaking bags from the room and slowly flushing them away. They bagged the dirt as they dug, packing it back in the hole when they'd finished for the night, but they couldn't replace everything removed. At least a third had to be dumped elsewhere. The sand, and where to hide it, had become their newest obsession.

Murphy watched the sand slip down the drain, nervous but giddy. No one had ever tried something like this at Kinross, and here they were, burrowing their way out of prison, all the way to Costa Rica. Oh, to see the look on their faces when they realize we're gone.¹¹ But now the water stopped draining. Now the water was backing up into the shower. They had clogged the plumbing.

With no way to clear the drain, Murphy and Hoffman retreated to their room, and when officers called in a prison maintenance crew, they cracked their door and listened to the workers puzzle over the cause. A guard handed them a metal serving spoon from the kitchen. "If I leave you alone with this," he said, "you're not going to do like Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape* and dig a tunnel out of here, are you?"

¹⁰ "Its golden-brown luster brought back childhood memories: a family vacation in Brighton, Michigan. I was five years old... running from the car to the beach... feeling the warm sand beneath my feet building sand castles... the smell of the lake and the sound of the water... chasing minnows in the shallows near the shore... splashing... playing... laughing... a time of innocence. My mind a clean slate. I could have been anything but wanted to be an astronaut. Big dream for such a small boy. I wondered what happened to him? How did I ever end up in this prison?" Hoffman

Joke or not, that was too close. Murphy walked down to the showers.

"Heard you guys talking," he said. "I'll bet the sand came from the yard crew. Guys get it on their shoes and, not wanting to track it into their rooms, they wash it off in the shower. And porters dump mop buckets in here."

"Makes sense," one of them said.

The workers cleared the shower drain, but were called back days later. The mop-closet sink was now clogged. They scraped out a mound of sand. Murphy appeared again and told them someone had done it on purpose. He'd ask around.

The crew shifted focus from the drains to the bathroom walls, prying off a soap dish and a fan. They dumped dozens of bags through the holes, filling the cinder blocks, until the sand dried and leaked through a crack in the mop-closet wall.

Must be the sand they're using to clog the drains, Murphy suggested. Hoffman plugged the hole, and Murphy spread the evidence on an icy sidewalk.

The snow would be their best hiding spot. Using strips of bedsheet, they rigged pouches to hold bags inside their snowsuits, then walked to far corners of the yard with Shavkey blocking, ready to distract roaming guards. Each officer must shake down five prisoners a day, and bags of dirt can't be explained away. Far from the other inmates, Murphy and Hoffman stomped pockets in the snow, pulled their arms into their suits, and ripped open the bags. Dirt ran down their legs and spilled into the holes.

They dumped several bags a day. But with each night of digging, they filled dozens more.

By mid-March, Murphy was spending half the night in the tunnel: three hours removing the bags so Hoffman could dig, and another three on the back end. They had dumped about four hundred bags but still had another eight hundred packed into the hole. As the tunnel grew longer, he and Hoffman tag-teamed the removal, relaying the bags. More than once they worked through the 7:00 A.M. shift change, when officers often glance into rooms.¹²

Dear Mom and Emily,

If you're reading this then the tunnel must have collapsed. Don't be sad. Just know that through the years you've been my inspiration and strength—the light at the end of my tunnel. My body may not have made it but my spirit is free.

Love,
Joe

Hoffman wrapped the note around a picture of him hugging his mother and sister and tucked it into his shirt pocket. He slipped into his sky-blue rain suit—bought from a maintenance worker for two bags of coffee—tied plastic bags over his socks and pulled on rubber gloves. If he had [continued on page 126]

¹¹ "For so many years I felt overwhelmed and consumed by the reality of my life sentence that I couldn't, in a matter of speaking, see any light at the end of the tunnel. But now my reality had become a real tunnel. I would lay in bed many mornings, dead tired after working all night on the tunnel yet unable to sleep for thoughts of how I would soon be free. But would I really be free or would I be trading one prison for another?" Murphy

¹² "We still had to clean the room. That meant sweeping up at least a bag full of sand from the floor, washing out the lockers, washing down the walls and bunks. The sand and dirt and dust would be all over the room. Then we would mop, shower, and then eat. Sleep would come only if we had no opportunity to get rid of dirt." Murphy

Now, very close, only 16 inches to go. Just over a foot to our freedom. Tim Murphy, 2/28/08

guys doing in there, digging a tunnel?"

Murphy laughed and stammered. "Probably the wind banging the fire escape against the building," he said.

"That's no fire escape," he said. "That's something with a lot of force."

They shifted tactics, waiting until the second floor had left for chow before hitting the floor. But still no cracks.


Their moods soured. All they had done was draw attention to themselves.

"Nothing's working," Shavkey said. The four watched seagulls pick at food near the dumpsters. Rock music from an inmate's radio drifted across the blacktop.

"This used to be an Air Force base. Maybe they put something in the floor to reinforce it. Maybe they bombproofed it," Shavkey said. "Maybe we're wasting our time."

Murphy and Hoffman traded glances. They'd be better off doing this alone. The project couldn't survive a loss of confidence.

"Let's trade the fifty for a hundred," Hoffman said. "We need a bunker buster."



women we love

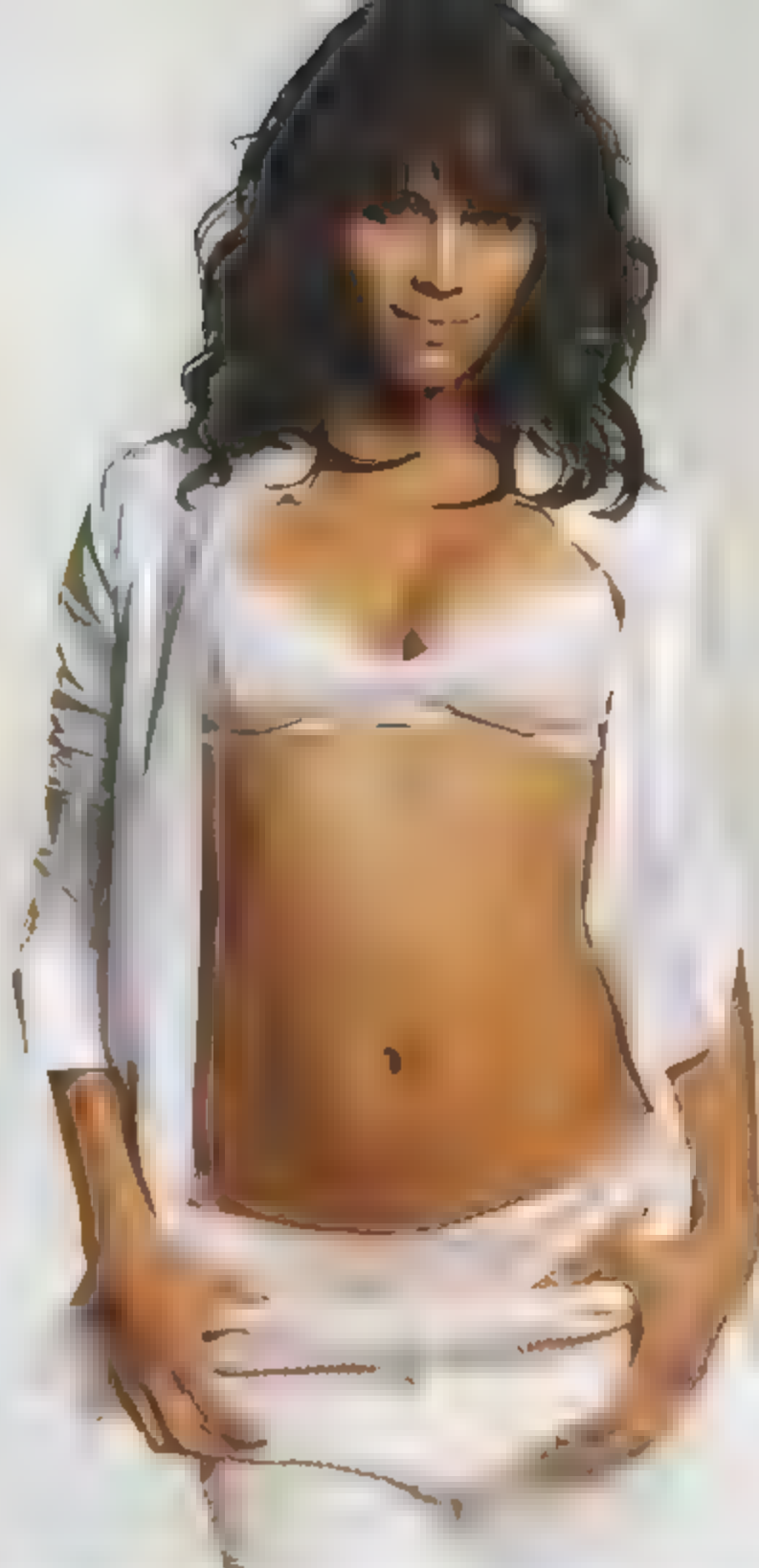
PAULA

Paula Patton
thinks conspira-
torial forces
may be watching
her every move.
We can't really
blame them.

BY
**RYAN
D'AGOSTINO**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MATT JONES

N

Not only was Paula Patton arriving for her interview in New York after an all-day photo shoot, but her publicist called to say it was running late. This is generally the kiss of death, because as hard as it is to fathom, photo shoots are exhausting, and interviews that follow them are generally marked by lethargy and canned answers about playing the mouse in the fourth-grade play. ¶ Paula Patton, however, is not your everyday actress. She's not your everyday human. Patton knows no fatigue. When she finally shows, she gallops across the floor, in heels, gives a long, powerful hug, apologizes elaborately and sincerely for being late, sprints to the ladies' room, returns in a squall of dark hair and billowing blouse and laughter, and, finally, breathes and sits. And then she just starts talking—for so long and with such passion that her Irish coffee gets cold, so she orders another one, which also gets cold. She fusses with her giant stone pendant necklace, tucking it under her dress, into her bosom, to keep it from swinging while she gesticulates. It's all very charming and exhilarating, and next time we won't sweat it if Patton is coming from two photo shoots and an ultramarathon.



PAULA PATTON: You can start recording now, because I wanted to ask you, do you ever do investigative journalism? I just saw this great documentary about the drug war in America, which was fascinating because it really goes into the conspiracy of drugs coming into this country—it can be a very dangerous profession when you start investigating in places that you shouldn't be.

ESQUIRE: Yeah, that's not really what I—

PP: I wouldn't say I'm a full-on conspiracy theorist, but my eyes are open to what's possible, because you realize that if you dig a little too far, you know, people just disappear.

ESQ: You're making me nervous. We can just talk about movies.

PP: My point is that anything's possible. The deeper you dig, the bigger the possibility that something could happen.

ESQ: In *Déjà Vu*, the government figured out a way for Denzel Washington to watch your character take a shower in the past.

PP: I'm not going that far. But surveillance is real. I just found out they put computer chips in people's clothing to figure out how to market to you.

ESQ: Google memorizes every search you do. Did you know that?

PP: No! I think the age we're living in is starting to get scary. And think about it: All the technology we have is there to keep us busy. Before, if your phone was busy, your phone was busy. You had no cell phone. Now people work 24/7, their BlackBerry keeps them

“This stuff will go really well with the bra-and-underwear photos. No, I'm not doing bra and underwear. I have to draw the line.”

busy, and e-mail—and when do they have time for other pursuits? When do they have time to be politically active?

ESQ: You think the government is behind this?

PP: I don't know who's behind anything. I don't know if there's some big master plan. I try not to have too many opinions. I just marvel at the world we live in.

ESQ: You've filmed three movies in the past year. In *Mirrors*, the newest one, you play a coroner, a job that would seem to require a personality darker than yours.

PP: You only see me doing coroner work for like a minute. But I realized that what we do as professions affects how we act as people, big-time. So I went down to the L. A. County Coroner's Office and I got to see people dissecting bodies. At first the coroner said, “No, I'm not different than most people.” But then he said, “Well, actually, I don't have road rage.” And he listed all these other things he doesn't do, because he's seen so much senseless death that he knows there's no reason to honk your horn or yell at someone. If you scream, “Hey, I'm walkin' here!” at the wrong guy, he could kill you.

ESQ: Will any great art come out of these troubling times we're in?

PP: It can. I think movies do it better than any other form. A movie is painting, it's photography, it's literature—because you have to have the screenplay—it's music. Put a different soundtrack to a comedy and it's a tragedy. A movie combines all those forms and forces you to pay attention for two hours with a group of people. And people aren't as well-read anymore, so we share a common knowledge through movies. I'm rambling now. I'm not going to talk anymore.

ESQ: But it's an interview.

PP: This stuff will go really well with the bra-and-underwear photos.

ESQ: Exactly!

PP: No, I'm not doing bra and underwear.

ESQ: Then what are you doing?

PP: Not bra and underwear. I have to draw the line.

ESQ: You've done bra and underwear in movies.

PP: I have. But it's a funny thing about nudity: I was watching this documentary, and Juliette Binoche, who has done a lot of nudity, said it feels totally natural at the time, but it's the way it's exploited afterward—put on a poster, or a scene put on the Internet. It gets disembodied from the story.

ESQ: Then you wouldn't want to know that someone is selling an eight-by-ten glossy of you in a bra and underwear on eBay?

PP: What was it, ninety-nine cents?

ESQ: I think it was double digits.

PP: Well, you know what I say to that? Good problem to have. If you're an actress and even one person knows your name, you're lucky. ■



ON THE FUTURE OF PAINTING "I sometimes use digital art to help draft my paintings, but drawing by hand still gives off a sense of knowledge and expertise that digital art can't. People will always appreciate a good painter—today, tomorrow, whenever."



Photographed with the painter, you draw, better be Picasso. You know the deal? Two-button wool sport coat (\$1,195), cotton shirt (\$125), silk tie (\$115), and silk pocket square (\$70), Polo by Ralph Lauren; wool trousers (\$670) by Ralph Lauren Purple Label.

DESIGN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MISCHA RICHTER

INTELLIGENT

ESQUIRE STYLE FALL PREVIEW

For the recent graduates of the **RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN**, innovation in the twenty-first century will be driven as much by design as by technology. Here, eleven standouts from the class of '08 dress for the immediate future in fall's best new collections and predict the shape of things to come.

ON THE FUTURE OF SCULPTURE "I was born in Switzerland and grew up in France, but I'm American, so like a lot of artists today, my work has been driven by issues of nationality. How do you place yourself in the world when there aren't many real boundaries anymore?"

in Calvin Klein

sculptor

JAMES EWART

104 ESQ

Photographed with his sculpture My Marianne Wool and-polyamide overcoat (\$1,125), cotton shirt (\$295), and wool trousers (\$450) by Calvin Klein Collection; leather shoes (\$525) by Moreschi



SAM GRAY

graphic designer

in Burberry Prorsum



ON THE FUTURE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

"The biggest challenge in graphic design is making sense of the information in the world today instead of just being overwhelmed by it. We're the ones organizing all that content and data and giving it a face that's approachable."

Wool coat (\$2,995), silk shirt (\$795), and wool-and-cotton trousers (\$795) by Burberry Prorsum.

**ON THE FUTURE OF
FURNITURE DESIGN**

1 -
"Watch for an explosion in biomimicry, in which designers take patterns from nature—the beauty and simplicity of those systems that have been developing for millions of years—and apply them to new design concepts."

2 -
"A chair can ask a lot of questions—about material, about disposability, about conventional ideas as to what furniture is."

3 -
"Yes, you can sit on it."



1 - **HAUSHON HALE** 2 - **HENRIK SÖDERSTRÖM** 3 - **DA SUL KIM**

furniture
designers

In Dolce &
Gabbana



1 - Photographed with his chair Paper Chair No. 1. Two-button wool suit (\$2,695), wool vest (\$560), and wool T-shirt (\$375) by **Dolce & Gabbana**; leather shoes (\$740) by Bottega Veneta.

2 - Photographed with his chair Viking Bench. Wool cable-knit sweater (\$2,195) and cotton corduroy trousers (\$750) by **Dolce & Gabbana**; suede boots (\$566) by Grenson.

3 - Photographed with his chair Action Stool. Wool cable-knit sweater (\$850), cotton shirt (\$375), and cashmere track pants (\$469) by **Dolce & Gabbana**.



LEO LIVSHETZ | industrial designer | In Giorgio Armani

ON THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

"I think there'll be an explosion of technology in the next decade that will trump the Industrial Revolution tenfold. We'll see smart materials that can change shape and color with a shift in temperature or ultra-violet radiation, and it's all going to lead to new design possibilities across the board—fashion, architecture, industrial design—you name it."

Two-button wool jacket (\$2,225), cotton shirt (\$335), and silk tie (\$165) by **Giorgio Armani**.



BRIAN BRIGGS | architect | in Louis Vuitton

ON THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

"It used to be that when you were working with an architect like Frank Lloyd Wright or Philip Johnson, it was all about that architect. But I think it's starting to encompass both the architect and whomever they work with. Artists, painters, anyone—it's as much about whom you work with and how you do it as it is about your specific design."

Two-button wool jacket (\$2,535), cotton shirt (\$855), and wool trousers (\$1,185) by **Louis Vuitton**; leather shoes (\$1,695) by John Lobb.

WINN BAUER | ceramist | in Prada

ON THE FUTURE OF CERAMICS "What we make is usually so fragile, but in the future we'll be pushing the limits structurally and chemically—just being mad scientists, getting different minerals from the ground and putting them together to see what we can make."



Two-button wool jacket (\$1,825), cotton shirt (\$830), and wool trousers (\$765) by **Prada**.

ON THE FUTURE OF GLASS "The tools that have been used for blowing glass have essentially been the same for centuries, but there are so many more options now, like laser cutting, that guide the process. You know, when people think about glass, they think about science, craft, or utilitarian uses, but I think they're going to start looking at it as more of a fine art."

In Yves
Saint
Laurent

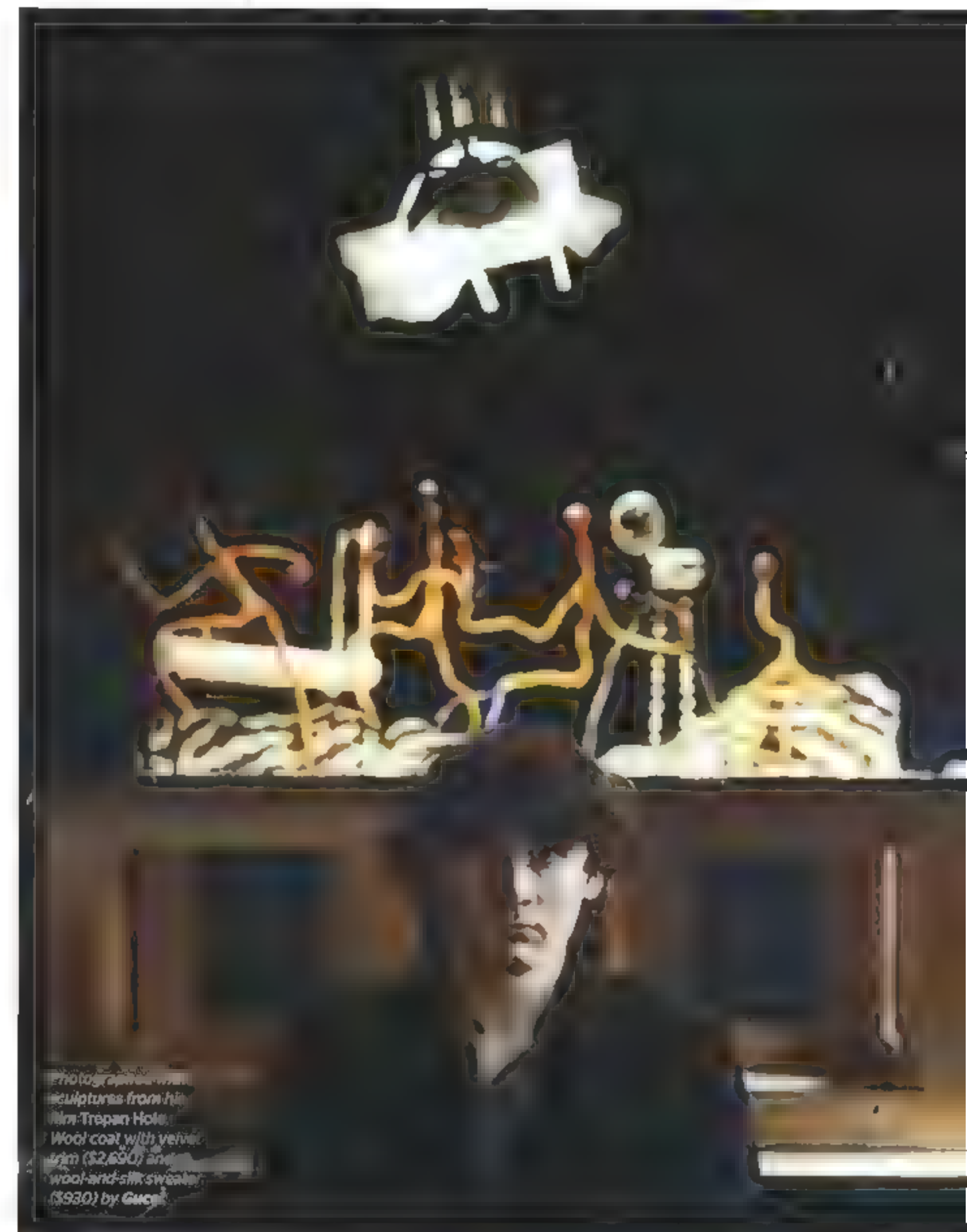
glass sculptor

COLIN LYNCH



Cashmere
cardigan
(\$1,375)
cotton henley
(\$435) and
wool trousers
(\$595) by
Yves Saint
Laurent

ANDY CAILL film, animation, and video artist | in Gucci



Photograph
sculptures from his
film *Trepan Hole*
Wool coat with velvet
trim (\$2,690) and
wool-and-silk sweater
(\$930) by Gucci

ON THE FUTURE OF FILM, ANIMATION, AND VIDEO

"I used to like the idea of the darkened theater and the captive audience, but the field is becoming more and more interactive, and there's less of a strict divide between the filmmaker and the audience. For example, with a video installation that follows individual viewers through a space, it's up to the viewers to decide how long they want to be a part of it. The audience gets to decide what happens, not us."

Jenna Jameson

Actress, 34, Los Angeles

Interviewed by Cal Fussman / Photograph by Shawn Mortensen

- > **Cmon downstairs.** I just got a new couch. We can break it in.
- > **The first thing** that comes out of my mouth is always right.
- > **If I have daughters,** I wouldn't want them to go into pornography. That's not really a conflict with who I am. You don't ever want your children to struggle. You want everything to come to them beautifully and perfectly. My industry is not cut out for harmony. I don't want my little girl to have to worry about whether or not those whispers are about her.
- > **Don't let your son** read my book until he's sixteen.
- > **Duriana.** It has this technology that doesn't allow you to bounce all over the place, yet it's still really supersoft.
- > **Getting a tattoo** should hurt. It's a rite of passage.
- > **I'll be out having** a good time and stick my gum on the side of my cup. I know, it's a horrible habit—and people will steal the cup. I've had girls come up in crowds and rip out my hair. Not because they're being mean. Because they want a piece of me. It's really weird.
- > **Women's vaginas** go back to their normal size after sex. They don't stretch out. Whatever you're born with you're kind of stuck with. And once you have a baby, you can always have extra stitches put in, right?
- > **I did my bathroom** like that on purpose. The photo of Jean Harlow. The one of me spread-eagle across from the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. I think what you see is such a beautiful contradiction. That room is me in a nutshell.
- > **I'm a paradox** wrapped inside a paradox.
- > **Yeah, I see those** "Increase your size" e-mails. So sad. To have someone actually put some implant into your penis—that's crazy! If I were a man, for me to even think of doing that, it would have to be inverted.
- > **I'm a powerful woman.** I think that's intimidating to a man, on every level. That's why I always go out of my way to be ultranice and ultrasweet and coy, because it makes people feel comfortable, and I want people to feel comfortable around me before I put them in a headlock.
- > **I would never** cheat on the person I'm with.
- > **I think more people** out there need to have more sex.
- > **There are certain things** that I just didn't feel comfortable with on film, and anal sex was one of them. It's just too intimate. To this day, I equate doing it with only someone that I 100 percent trust. It's very private for me.
- > **Dancing at a strip club** is a job. Men don't want to feel like they're giving us money to do what we're doing. They want to feel like we're doing it on our own. Guys have to realize that the money they're giving a stripper is paying rent and making car payments.
- > **I hate getting political** and stuff, but when really right-wing people get into office, they worry about things that should be the least of our worries. Whether or not I'm getting it doggy style from a black man should not be their concern. They should be worrying about health care, about our homeless, about the war. How about bringing the troops home? Call me crazy.
- > **George Bush** has read my book. Don't act like he hasn't.
- > **What the news** is feeding us is so different from what is happening.
- > **When I was first approached** about debating at Oxford, I was like, How am I going to do this? I barely got a diploma. How do I debate against professors? But my husband at the time said, "Do you think those professors know more about pornography than you?" So I wrote a ten-minute speech. But I never looked down at it once. The passion just poured out of me. I could see how many people in the audience were against me in the beginning. But as I got into my story and talked about all the things I've learned along the way, I could see the tide turning. I could see the women in the audience understanding that I'm just a normal girl, and slowly they started to relate to me. After a debate at Oxford, the audience can walk out of one of two doors—one for pro, another for con. I stood there watching nearly everybody go through the pro door. It was beautiful. There are certain moments in my life that I remember kind of stepping back and thinking to myself, Please print this on your brain, because this is something that you want to be able to tell your children. That was one of those moments. *I win, motherfucker. I win.*
- > **When you're fearful,** you stumble.
- > **My definition** of courage is never letting anyone define you.
- > **I don't know** what happens next. At the end, I just want to feel completion. What's completion? I don't know.
- > **I remember** finishing my book and thinking, Okay, now I'm going to settle down, have kids. I'm going to ride off quietly into the sunset. Now look. It seems like I will forever be that crazy girl who never rides off into the sunset. I'm always going to be the one riding the fucking bronco. In assless chaps. ■



Jenna Jameson was crowned Porn's best new starlet in 1994 and inducted into the industry's hall of fame in 2006. She's been acting behind the scenes, writing the memoirs and launching clothing lines. House of Jameson.



Portrait of the School Shooter as a Young Man

We were told that Steven Kazmierczak, who killed five students and then himself at Northern Illinois University in February, was a sweet, unassuming, overachieving grad student who inexplicably snapped. He was not.

BY DAVID VANN

By the end, there is no night

or day. No sleep. Just time, waiting.

He sits on the end of his bed in a broken-down Travelodge. Smokes a Newport. Stale smell of old cigarettes, of all the lives that have passed through this room. Across his lap, a Remington 12-gauge shotgun, the barrel sawed off. His hands on it, one on the stock, one on the barrel. He can't sit still, though. Always fidgeting.

Waiting. He's been in this room for almost three days, calling people, e-mailing, saying goodbye. The room is cluttered with soap, moisturizer, deodorant. Cotton balls. Empty cans of Red Bull.

Beside him, laid out carefully, a Glock 9mm, Sig Sauer .380, Hi-

Point .380. He picks up the Glock, checks the clip. Makes sure it's full. Checks it again. Checks it again. Threes have always spoken to him, shown him what to do. Three pistols. Three shells in the shotgun.

The Glock doesn't seem real. Looks like plastic, feels like plastic. A toy gun, almost.

Sets the pistol down. Picks up the next, and the next, checks each clip three times. Checks the extra clips. A bullet is so small, so heavy for its size.

Turns his right forearm up a bit, pushes up the sleeve, looks at his tattoo again. A \$700 reminder in black and red.

He lays the shotgun in its guitar case. He closes the latches, tucks all three pistols into his holsters, everything hidden by his coat. Checks himself in the mirror, walks to the door, then has to go back to check again, just to make sure. Always checking.

Turns right out of the motel lot, just a white Honda Civic, nothing you'd notice. Left on Carroll Avenue. Left into the guest parking lot.

Parks a couple hundred feet from Cole Hall. A cold, overcast day. Snow. Listens to a CD the police will find in his stereo. He's titled it "Final CD." Waits for the last song, Marilyn Manson's "The Last Day on Earth." Class will be over soon. He'll have to go soon. One last song. *I know they want me dead. / I know it's the last day on earth.*

"I've been shot."

This was the voice mail Steve Kazmierczak's best friend Kevin left for Steve when he heard about the shooting on campus. Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Six dead. Eighteen wounded. He didn't know that Steve was the shooter. Called Steve's cell; straight to voice mail. "I've been shot!" he laughed. "Give me a call back."

This was their sense of humor. They'd joked about the shirt Steve wore to the shooting, a black T-shirt with **TERRORIST** in white letters and a red graphic of an AK-47 assault rifle. The joke was about showing up at an airport with that shirt. Steve had another shirt of a rifleman that said, **I LOVE A PARADE**, about JFK's assassination.

"I thought it was the funniest shirt," Kevin says. "But it's just an example of our humor. It was nothing harmful, as far as that goes."

They'd discussed Columbine and Virginia Tech in detail, gone over the "methodology," choice of weapons and such. Steve admired how Cho thought to chain the doors, how Dylan and Eric planned to create confusion with the propane-tank bombs.

Kevin tries Steve again and again. Straight to voice mail each time.

At ten o'clock that night, after details on the news make it seem Steve is likely the shooter, Kevin sends a text message to Steve's roommate and sometime girlfriend, Jessica Baty. "Is Steve okay?"

A detective calls him at two in the morning. "Oh, it's Steve," Kevin says. There's no denying anymore what he already knows.

When Jessica arrives home that evening, police officers are waiting for her. They won't tell her what's wrong, and she isn't allowed to enter her apartment. Instead she's taken away in a patrol car. She starts to cry, asks if something has happened to Steve. They won't tell her anything, though. A long interview at the police station, and she consents to a search of her apartment, so after midnight it's back in the patrol car. "Did Steve kill himself?"

Yes, they tell her finally, and they search all of Steve's things, all of her things, their life together. Her parents arrive to help her. She escapes to a hotel room. But the media's already here, a news truck out front, everyone asking about warning signs.

Over and over, she goes over the smallest details in her head. The trips to the gun range. The guns themselves. The box of coal he gave to his sister for Christmas. For Halloween, he dressed up as Jigsaw from the *Saw* movies.

"No, no way. Steve would never do such a thing," she tells CNN. Steve was sweet, a near-perfect student, winner of the Deans' Award. Her voice is a baby voice, her face open and midwestern, revealing only her sadness at this inexplicable event. She's wearing an orange sweatshirt, holds a love note from Steve she received the day of the shooting, along with some books, a new cell phone, a wedding ring. He'd asked her ring size just days ago.

Some names of people incidental to Steve Kazmierczak's story have been changed to protect their privacy.

in middle distances and distances. The fourth and inner recent one was 2.17/98 to 2.18/98. It is a small, dark, and visible, black, white.

PLACEMENTS: Steve has lived with his biological family all of his life.

MEDICATIONS: Steve is currently taking Prozac 20 mg in the a.m. / Vyproxa .0 mg, at his and Depakote 500 mg in the a.m. and 500 mg at his. Past medication includes Paxil, Cimetidine, Risperdal, Lithium and Cylert.

SYMPTOMS: Steve stated that when symptomatic he becomes anxious, depressed and unable to sleep. He reports losing interest in all leisure activities, increases his Marijuana use, has suicidal thoughts and feels worthless. Staff from Alexian Brothers report that Steve can become verbally aggressive and argumentative, has low self-confidence and esteem, and has a history of self-harm. Steve has an extensive history of suicide attempts by overdosing on his medication.

EDUCATION: Steve graduated from Elk Grove Village High School in June of 1998. He has a full scale IQ of 100. Reports from high school teachers state that Steve had difficulty with his peers and poor coping strategies. He also had difficulty expressing his feelings. He was an excellent student and did well in class. Steve is interested in taking classes through the Community Scholars Program while at the YAP.

VOCATIONAL: Steve has an extensive job history, however, he has held many jobs in a short period of time. He stated that he likes to check out different jobs as he is trying to figure out what he would like to pursue as a career. He reported working at Pirate's Cove amusement park for three years as a ride attendant. He also worked in a haunted house for three years during Halloween season. He stated that he worked at Toys R Us for three months as a cashier. He worked at McDonald's as a cashier for two months and a 7-Eleven as a cashier for two days until he was let go because they couldn't afford to pay him. He worked at Jewel for six months as a bagger. His most recent job is at Dominick's as a cashier for the last two months. He currently works at Dominick's 20 hours a week.

INDEPENDENT LIVING: Steve has never lived independently. He has difficulty waking up in the morning. He does a major job with keeping his room clean. Steve needs to learn better and more effective independent living skills.

SOCIAL: Steve presents as a fairly social person. He is able to hold pleasant conversations. Steve reports that he has a few close friends with whom he spends time.

Provide Steve with information that he can use to help him in his life.

The third page of Steve Kazmierczak's service needs summary from the home where he moved after high school. His initial prognosis is listed as fair. He is very intelligent, however, his illness affects his ability to function independently on a consistent basis.

"He was probably the nicest, most caring person ever. . . . He was just under a lot of stress from school. He didn't have a job, so he felt bad about that—he wasn't erratic, he wasn't psychotic, he wasn't delusional, he was Steve. He was normal."

Jessica was Steve's confessor. He told her everything—his long mental-health history, his anxiety, his family turmoil, his recent hunger for sex with women he met through the Internet, with a male professor. He told everyone else almost nothing.

Steve grew up watching

horror movies with his mother. Fleishy, enormous, laid out beside him on the couch. Middle of the day, and all shades are drawn. Dark. She's protective, doesn't want Steve to go outside. Won't let him play much with other children. She's not mentally right, according to Steve's godfather, but what can he do? A family feud.

Horror movies and the Bible, those are what animate this living room, those are Steve's inheritance. A close fit, the plagues, the tortures of Job. God's sadistic games, teaching his flock to appreciate the value and meaning of their lives. The flesh of no consequence. Late night, his mother can't sleep. An insomniac with anxiety problems. A history of depression on his father's side, Steve's grandfather an alcoholic. So they continue on, still watching.

At school, Steve is an average student. "Steve appears very impulsive and does not want to go back and check his work, therefore there are a lot of errors. At our conference we can discuss ways to

help Steve work up to his potential," writes his third-grade teacher, Ms. Moser. A few years later, Iowa test score 58th percentile. By now he's looking for places to hide, tries to find something like the living room, finds it at last in the band-practice rooms of Grove Junior High. Plays tenor sax, has a friend, Adam Holzer, skinny and geeky with a nervous smile and round glasses far too large for his face. Long straight hair hanging slack, parted in the middle. Steve no looker himself. Face too skinny at the bottom, almost no mouth or chin. Whenever he focuses on work, the back of his wrist against his forehead, hand hanging out limply. Kids call him fag because of the hand. He and Adam get notes to leave class as often as possible, especially gym class, whenever a concert or performance of any kind is on the schedule.

After school, they go home to Steve's in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. A small tract house abutting a four-lane road, one story, three small bedrooms. If it weren't for the living room extending a few extra feet, the house would be a perfect rectangle, same as a double-wide. His mother is a secretary now, his father a letter carrier. They won't be home for hours.

Steve goes straight for the pellet gun, walks outside to the shed. Perfect cover. Pumps the gun, building up air pressure, slides in a small pellet, and closes the bolt.

He can hear his dog breathing, though, up close. A pug with breathing problems. He picks it up by its hind legs and hurls it, hard, against the wall. That's how Adam remembers it.

Now Steve can focus.

The cars are going fast, and they're in view for only a couple car lengths. And the pellet is slow. So he holds the gun aimed to the right, and when a car flashes in from the left, he pulls the trigger. The gun spits, and Steve and Adam hang for a moment, waiting for the sound of a pellet hitting metal. They squeal if they hear it, their joy as compressed as the air in the gun.

Even better than the pellet gun, though, are Drano bombs. Pete Rachowsky, a kid Steve knows from school, teaches other kids how to make them. Steve and one of his few friends, Joe Russo, decide to try it. Maybe it's a way to cement the friendship with Joe. Steve is very protective of his friends, recalls Adam. There aren't many who will have him.

They wait until after dinner. A Saturday night, eighth grade. They find a house that's dark. Well kept with an indented porch. They sneak up on tiptoe, crouch down. Steve pulls out the two-liter bottle he's brought from home, and they fill it just how Pete taught. Nothing happens for a while. Then it blows, an explosion louder than they could have hoped. Glorious. They run back through the forest, hyped up on adrenaline and joy, laughing.

Five days later, Pete's mother finds two-liter bottles and the ingredients for Drano bombs in her son's backpack. She tells the police, the police haul Pete in for questioning, and he eventually gives up Steve and Joe.

Top: The backyard and shed from which Steve pelted cars. Bottom: The giant tubes where Steve and his high school friends painted graffiti, smoked, and blew things up.

He takes fifty Depakote, goes to sleep. He's surprised to wake up. Goes to school. "I want to die," he tells the nurse. "Life sucks."

The detectives call Steve's parents, and they bring Steve in for questioning. "We spoke to Steven's parents, and they related that Steven was very nervous and scared about being at the police station and he realized that what he had done was a mistake," reads the police report from February 10, 1994. "They advised that they would discipline him and would like us to speak to Steven to scare him in order that he would not make any bombs in the future."

Steve is remorseful. He gives the police names of other students who know how to make the bombs. He vows he'll never do something like this again. He loses friends. He loses more, later, when he's caught talking behind Adam's back.

It takes time, unbearable time, all of ninth grade and into tenth grade, to patch together his friendships. By then, Steve's a Goth. This is what he and his friends become in high school. Just beyond the school grounds is a parking lot where they all gather and smoke. Long black trench coats, black leather boots, chains and spikes. He's still an outsider, though, even among his friends.

Yet somehow the miraculous happens. Beth King likes him for some reason, and suddenly Steve has a

girlfriend. She's cute, too, looks like Liv Tyler, wears a black choker. Then, in the winter, she dumps him, tells everyone he has a small penis, can't satisfy her in bed. Steve's older sister, Susan, is no help. She's always had an easier time. The two of them are night and day.

So Steve goes for the lowest common denominator, Kim, "a girl your parents wouldn't want you to date," says Adam. Secret sex for that entire summer after tenth grade. No one is supposed to know, except Steve's friends. At his friend Rich's house, a foam lounge that reclines. They call it the Flip 'n' Fuck. They do it on the ottoman, too, in Rich's living room late at night, just a moving sheet with two bodies underneath.

Steve spends almost no time at home. He lives at his friends' houses the fall of eleventh grade. He's better friends now with Julie Creamer, who's on meds for bipolar, same as Steve. The hangout is the Tubes. A short walk to the forest preserve, hop a fence, and slog through mud and wet grass past the federal nursery, rows of trees. In the next field, almost a dozen leftover concrete sewer pipes six feet in diameter, tall enough to stand inside.

Most of the time, at least half a dozen of their friends are here. They light chemicals on fire, blow shit up, shoot pellet guns, make out, smoke pot, sneak away to the porno stash in the trees. When-

ever they shoot, Steve brags he has a membership with the NRA.

Adam and Steve are friends again, sort of, and they bring white spray paint one day for tagging. Steve tags a white swastika on the front of one of the pipes. "You're doing your swastika wrong," Adam says to him.

"No I'm not."

"Remember how you used to put 'Hi Ho Hitler' instead of 'Heil Hitler'?"

"Shut up. I'll show you what's real." And Steve gives Adam a business card from the KKK. Then he tags "blows" under "Metallica," even though he loves Metallica.

On colder nights, they hang out in one of the bathrooms. Twenty by twenty feet, stand-alone cinder-block huts in the wil-



On a yellow note, I saw the way and our mom acted swifly as if with Russell in 2005 to ensure that you had total control of Dad's decisions who was to take over, as well as his financials, etc. Our father informed me of this when we went to the bank and during subsequent conversations. I do not care about the money or property (which you seem to obsess over) and therefore, let the need to go behind my back (gain control of), but I find it reprehensible that you would conspire with others to ensure that I didn't have any say in the wishes of our father once he passes. Have you no shame?

While out in Florida, I had several conversations with Dad and learned that Mom never truly forgave me for being a "bad delinquent" teenager and that she never trusted me—even after I spent 4 years in college earning near perfect grades. Susan, I have had an epiphany while in Florida and I now realize why you have so much pent up hatred against me as well. Punishing people for mistakes they have made in their pasts is shallow and shows a lack of character. I hope that once you obtain control over our father's property (money) that you get yourself a good therapist to work out these issues. Seriously, I mean that from the depths of my heart. After all, we are bound by blood, regardless of our current relationship (or a seeming lack thereof).

Steve's e-mails to his sister were often long, formal, and aggressive, like this excerpt from November 2007.

derness. Their own concrete chalets. They're used, also, by gay cruisers. If you back into a parking space here, you're asking for a visit.

Steve has been with a man before. He'll admit this to Jessica years later. But his friends in high school don't know. Secret sex, like his summer with Kim.

By the end of the semester, as it gets colder, Steve has become odd, even for him, and antisocial. He doesn't feel like himself. He's anxious all the time.

"Is something going on at home?" Julie asks him.

"Nothing," he says. "I don't want to talk about it."

Steve decides to commit suicide, plans it ahead of time, holds a sale first to get rid of all his stuff. His friend Jason gets his guitar. His friend Lee gets his video games. "He sold all his shit," Adam says.

December 14, 1996, Steve overdoses on Tylenol and calls Beth King. His parents throw him into Rush University Medical Center for a week, but it doesn't help. Nothing does. He's anxious all the time, depressed, unable to sleep. He blows up on the meds, goes from skinny to obese, three hundred pounds, in just a couple months. Rich can't understand what's happened. Steve is like a zombie, with a faraway stare. "It's like the personality was just sucked out of him," he says.

Julie tries to talk with him, and most of the time he's just glassy-eyed, so out of it he won't even look at her. In one clear moment, he stands at the mirror with her, at her house. He has terrible acne, one of the side effects. "You don't need makeup," he tells her. "You look beautiful. I look like shit. Look at me. This is horrible."

People talk about him at school that winter. He's sitting in the cafeteria, an enormous and open room right off the main hall, a place you can't hide. He's with Julie, and a couple jocks come up to him. They know his sister, Susan, and they know Joe Russo's older brother and sister. They know all about him. "Hey, Suicide Steve, what's up?" one of them asks. "Uh-oh, don't say that, Crazy Mierczak might off himself," the other says. Then the first one flips Steve's tray onto the floor, all his food.

Steve walks out to the Goth lot and Julie follows him. "Who cares about them," she says.

"Just back off," he says, and he won't say anything more the rest

of the day.

The next day, though, he tells her, "I love school because I love working. But I hate school because of everyone in my classes. I hate everyone."

"You can't hate everyone," she tells him.

"You don't hate me."

"No."

"So the others?"

"I do. Some people I wanna hurt."

The slide accelerates.

April 8, 1997, Elk Grove High School denies a request by Steve's parents to have a case-study evaluation. They give his parents a handbook on dealing with students with disabilities.

April 13, Steve overdoses on forty Ambien and slits his wrists. Hospitalized at Rush.

November 4, the fall of his senior year, he tells his mother he doesn't want to go to school anymore. They fight, he says he's not going, and then, at eleven o'clock, he takes fifty Depakote, an entire bottle, and goes to sleep. He's surprised to wake up in the morning. He's able to get dressed, go

to school, but his first teacher notices right away how drowsy he is, and he's taken to the nurse's office. According to the hospital report, he tells the nurse, "I want to die. Life sucks." This time he's taken to Alexian Brothers hospital. They keep him for three days.

January 10, 1998, two months later, he's at Alexian again for suicidal thoughts.

Four days earlier, the cops stop him, along with Pete Rachowsky, after a neighbor reports they were smoking marijuana. No one will leave them alone.

February 7 to 11, he's back in Alexian again.

February 9, his father walks into the police station and tells them Pete Rachowsky "is selling acid, fake acid, marijuana, and some other unknown substance that he can't remember." The information is from his son, Steve. Steve's father wants Pete and two other high-school-dropout drug dealers, Martin and Andy, kept away from his son.

February 11, Steve gets out of Alexian but goes back the next day, for suicidal thoughts and violent mood swings. He's up and down on all the meds, all over the place, a mess, and maybe he's scared, also, about what will happen with Pete. He takes 120 doses of Depakote, enough that he really should be dead, but even that doesn't work.

March 2, Steve's father talks with the police again. He has more information now. Pete sells in Lions Park, near the high school, and keeps his drugs in the battery compartment of his Walkman. The police bust Pete for marijuana possession.

The next week, on March 10, after dinner, Steve fights with his mother about Pete. She doesn't want him hanging out with Pete anymore. He storms out at seven o'clock, and she calls the police to file a missing-juvenile report. "He suffers from depression," she tells them. "He didn't take his last two doses of medication."

Two days later Steve is home, goes back to his part-time job at the public library, where a lot of his friends work. Steve is a page, restacking books. But the next week, Pete Rachowsky comes in. He knows how he got busted.

Pete corners Steve in the library. It's eight o'clock. The library has mostly cleared out. Pete is tall, reddish-brown hair, on fire. "For less than an ounce, I could get people to take care of you," he says, according to a complaint Steve files with the police. He's scared of

Pete, wants this all on record.

"Leave me alone," he says. Pete steps closer, backs him against a wall. "I could have your house burned down. Easy enough to throw a brick through your window."

At the end of his senior year, Steve's parents don't include his baby picture and a congratulatory note from the family in his yearbook. Joe Russo's parents do this, and Adam's parents, etc., but Steve's parents stopped filling in his "School Days" scrapbook years ago. They're afraid of their son.

In June, he graduates. And what he graduates to is a group home.

The Mary Hill

Residence is a narrow three-story brownstone, like the side tower on a castle with no castle attached. The street is narrow, lined with cars that have been dented up and beaten. There's an urban park across the street, chain-link fence and playground structures.

Before Steve moves in, he takes a tour and has a thorough evaluation:

"DESCRIPTION OF MEMBER. Steve is a 17 y.o. Caucasian male who appears his stated age. He is tall and overweight. During his tour, Steve was very quiet and did not ask many questions. His thought form appeared normal and his affect flat. He did not exhibit any bizarre or inappropriate behaviors during his tour—

"MEDICATIONS: Steve is currently taking Prozac 20 mg in the a.m., Zyprexa 10 mg at hs and Depakote 500 mg in the a.m. and 1,000 mg at hs. Past medication includes Paxil, Cogentin, Risperdal, Lithium and Cylert.

"SYMPTOMS: Steve stated that when symptomatic he becomes anxious, depressed and unable to sleep. He reports losing interest in all leisure activities... has suicidal thoughts and feels worthless—

They wake Steve up early here. They monitor his medications so he can't overdose. They make him keep everything clean. They make him work in the kitchen. He's washing dishes. Then it's off to therapy. Group problem-solving therapy, Mondays and Wednesdays. Vocational skills training on Fridays. Then all the one-on-one sessions.

Rather than getting better, his symptoms get worse. He's oversedated, overweight, doesn't want to take his meds. He has special powers, though, he tells his psychiatrist. He can see his old girlfriend, Beth. And he can read minds. He's been able to do this all his life, but the power is stronger now, for some reason. He knows what they think of him here, how they underestimate him. The other residents so slow you can actually see them think, see each twitch of a thought, the forming of each word on their lips.

He crawls through the days, through the months, the longest time of his life. Through the fall, through winter, every day unbearable, every day the same. He escapes several times, makes his way home to Elk Grove Village, to his parents' house, begs them to take him back. Every time they drive him back to Mary Hill. Steve blames his mom, calls her a whore, a bitch, a slut.

The following February, Thresholds, the agency that runs Mary Hill, decides to transition Steve out of the residential program into an SRO, a single-room occupancy. He has his own room now in a

The physical world is a kind of torture of meaning to Steve. Threes speak to him, almost prophetically, tell him what to do.

broke-down building, and they all share a bathroom. This is an even worse neighborhood. "His first night in the SRO was rough," says Jessica. "I remember him telling me about how he heard gunshots and someone was pounding on his door, thinking that Steven was the previous occupant. Steven said that he put furniture in front of the door."

They place him in a job at Walgreens, but he's fired after a month, in April, for poor attendance. He's hired at Osco pharmacy in June, but fired six weeks later. The next stop is Kmart in September. He thinks people are following him, that they're against him, ganging up. He gets in arguments with his coworkers, anxious and emotional. He's on Seroquel and Clozaril.

"Steve has two concerns which are not likely related to meds—has vivid thoughts of the past when he falls asleep, and still feels people hassle him at work—says he's overly sensitive to teasing," reports his psychiatrist in October. He has to check doors over and over, and touch things. The physical world has become a kind of torture of meaning. Threes speak to

him, almost prophetically, tell him what to do.

A few weeks later, Steve feels another resident has insulted him, so he bumps him in the smoking area. The guy hits Steve in the face. Steve breaks his hand hitting the guy several times in the head.

Then one morning he wakes up and he's wet the bed. This freaks him out, so he tries to hide it. It happens again, and again, six or sev-



An undated video image of Steve at NIL around the time he met his mentor Jim Thomas. Three years later he wrote Thomas: "When I came to NIL, I was practically a recluse, and was somewhat anti-social. Even though you may not realize it, I have grown throughout the years due to your influence, and I owe a lot of that to you."

en times. He's a bed wetter now, on top of everything else. They reduce the Clozaril, and that helps. He chooses more Seroquel and less Clozaril, even though it will make him sleepier. He can't be a bed wetter. He'd rather be a zombie.

A few weeks later he visits his sister at University of Illinois. Maybe it's seeing people his age who are happy. People his age who aren't drugged out all the time. But

at this point something seems to click in Steve.

They've broken him with all the meds, and he's just smart enough to know. He needs to get off these drugs. He needs to get himself normal. He wants to go to school and do something with his life.



Photos from Jessica's MySpace page. Top: graduation day, May 2006. Bottom: Steve at Universal Studios in Florida, Thanksgiving 2007.

Come January he enrolls in a couple courses at Truman, a two-year community college. His therapists warn him that getting overinvolved in school and ignoring his mental health issues will lead to a hard "crash" that will wreck everything he's accomplished. But Steve is determined.

He also begins weaning himself off the meds. He has to do this. He knows he can.

And he does.

He hides this fact for five months. They believe he's still taking the pills. He even reports nonexistent side effects, begins living a double life. They think they still have him, but he's on his way out. He quits seeing his therapist, shaves his head. Tattoos "FTW," for "Fuck the world," on his skin. He complains about noise and sleeping.

When he breaks the news, his case manager points out that over the previous five and a half months without meds, Steve has "held one job for three and a half weeks only, quit school without earning credit, and has created very visible homemade tattoos on his finger and over the length of his forearm. He has a very limited social network and has rejected or quit therapy, job club, and his college support program." But he also says something else. He suggests they expedite Steve's discharge, since he's not willing to work with them anymore. Steve wants out of Thresholds, and now they want him to go.

Steve becomes the Chicago Department of Public Health's problem, and they decide they can't handle him and that his family can afford private services. But Steve fixes the problem. He enlists in the Army on September 5, 2001.

Steve needs this.

He checks "no" on his Army application for suicide attempts. No, also, for "evaluated or treated for a mental condition," "used illegal

drugs or abused prescription drugs," "depression or excessive worry," "received counseling of any type," "frequent trouble sleeping," and "anxiety or panic attacks." They give him a \$4,000 cash bonus and sign him up for the Army College Fund. He's shipped off to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for basic.

Steve doesn't get along with his bunkmate, but he loves everything else about the Army. All this structure, all the order. How great a relief it must be from his OCD. No more insomnia. No more struggle to get up. No more worry about what to do with the day. Every minute is planned for him. He runs and runs and runs.

Every one of them a maggot, every one of them the same. No more worry about what others will think. No minds to read, because their minds are beaten flat. He keeps his locker neat, checks everything three times, wins praise for this.

They train him how to shoot, how to kill. No emotional or psychological response, that's what they're looking for, and he can do this. He tells Jessica and Kevin about it, even years later. A point of pride.

The land is flat here, endless in all directions, and the inside of his mind feels like this for the first time, open, stretching on and on, a kind of wind that's blown all the anxiety away.

On December 1, he's notified he'll be stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, in the 6th Air Defense Artillery Brigade.

And then something happens.

It's unclear exactly what triggers it—maybe Steve loses his temper. Maybe the Army is just late in processing his full background check. But they find out

that Steve has been hospitalized in the past for psychotic episodes and suicide attempts. Steve is flagged.

They pull him in for a psych exam. He's worried. What do they know? Is this normal, to be tested like this? He tries to get the doctor to tell him what's up, but he won't say anything.

According to his military file, three days later Steve is carted off to William Beaumont Army Medical Center. They throw him in the Army psych ward as a precaution against any suicide attempts. They tell him he's possibly a danger to himself or others. He asks them what this is about, and they don't tell him until the next day. They've discovered he lied on his application, concealed his mental-health history, his suicide attempts, and his psychotic episodes, including hearing voices and hallucinations. They tell him it's a fraudulent enlistment, because he did it for monetary gain, for the cash bonus and the Army College Fund. They give him an uncharacterized discharge, an entry-level status separation.

On February 13, 2002, they drop him off in his hometown, Elk Grove Village. Steve is crushed about being kicked out. He'll talk about it over and over with friends in years to come. He could have spent his life in the military. But he does understand that a kind of minor miracle has happened. He's been off meds for a year now.

August 2002.

Strange Steve, that's what they call him in the dorm. He knows they call him this, and it's because of his roommate, Ahron Mack. Ahron tells everyone Steve's a psycho.

They're in a suite with three other guys in Stevenson Towers, a dorm complex on the NIU campus. It's been six months since Steve

left the Army and moved home to apply for school. Steve takes his food from the cafeteria, goes up to the room, sits at his desk, and eats alone. He watches the news on CNN, but all he can think about is goddamn Sallie Mae. He's not going to have the money in time to pay his tuition.

He's busting his ass, every single day. He knows if he doesn't make it now, it's straight back to the SRO in Chicago. This is his one chance. No meds. No more Suicide Steve. But everyone's against him. Even Sallie Mae.

Ahron comes back from dinner, so Steve fires up the Xbox, puts in the earphones, plays Halo. He likes the sniper rifle best. Zoom in five times, or ten times, one shot, one kill, clear across the canyon.

Ahron tries to get Steve off Xbox, tries to get him out, but he refuses. Steve doesn't drink, doesn't do drugs, won't leave the room except to eat, Ahron tells the police later.

At midnight, Steve takes a shower. He wears long sleeves every day, even when it's muggy and hot. He doesn't want anyone to see his tattoos, the home-made sword on his forearm. He showers when no one will see, keeps the light turned off, likes the darkness.

He can't sleep, though. He goes over everything in his head, every midterm, every final coming up, every paper. It all has weight, heft, a physical presence pressing in on him, his mind a flatland still but the horizon building up, coming closer.

Ahron's alarm goes off, and Ahron doesn't wake up. He has some sort of "condition"—you can yell at him or even shake him, and he won't wake up. But he still sets the alarm, a little gift for Steve.

So Steve hucks tennis balls at his head, hard, and this finally wakes him up. Ahron is upset, has the nerve to complain. Steve turns on CNN, loud.

Steve has class that day in Cole Hall, Room 100, a big auditorium. Three sections of seats for several hundred, two aisles between. The seats go right up to the wall in the side sections, a kind of trap. The two aisles the only way out. The professor is up on a stage. Music 220—Intro to Music. Steve listens.

Back at the dorm, Steve runs into Phillip, one of his suitemates. Ahron isn't around. Steve speaks quietly, but he's hurrying, tripping over his words, telling Phillip about Ted Bundy, about Jeffrey Dahmer, about Hitler. "He would talk about them as if he idolized them," Phillip will later write in his statement to police. "He was intrigued as to how they committed their murders, and he would tell their stories to others over and over again."

Phillip is good to talk to. He listens. But then he says he has homework to do, breaks off the conversation just as they're really getting into Hitler, and then there's dinner, and Steve is eating alone again, watching CNN. Always some killing somewhere, some disaster. And the control. The facade of two parties, masking the real power brokers. But Steve can see. He's going to major in political science.

Later, he talks with Phillip again, getting back to their conversation about Hitler. "I told him to stop because I had already heard him tell me their stories too many times, and I was tired of hearing them," recalls Phillip.

Steve must think Ahron has gotten to Phillip. "Strange Steve." So fuck them all. He'll move out, get a single. This is unbearable.

The next fall, 2003, things are much better. He has his own room. Studying all the time, almost every waking hour. Things finally seem to be falling into place.

He's taking Intro to Sociology in Cole Hall 100 with Professor Jim Thomas. Thomas is an old guy, tall with wild white hair.

Steve spends as much time as his students need, encourages them. He affects their lives in a positive way, and they love him for it.

He asks questions. He challenges his own authority. "How can you subvert the power of the professor?" he asks. "If you're not happy with this power relationship, what can you do to affect it?" He's into "crim," which is criminology, studies prisons. Steve realizes prisons are a way into understanding America. The average stay is only a couple of years, but the country believes they can lock people away, toss the key. Thomas wants people rehabilitated, believes in rehab, doesn't ask questions about Steve's past.

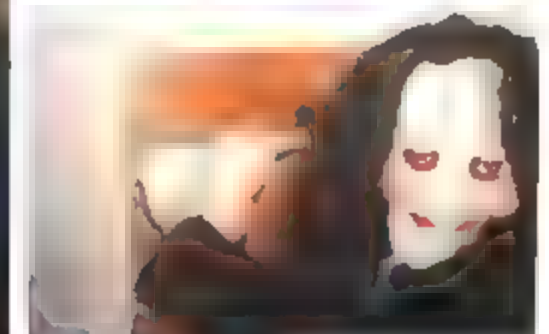
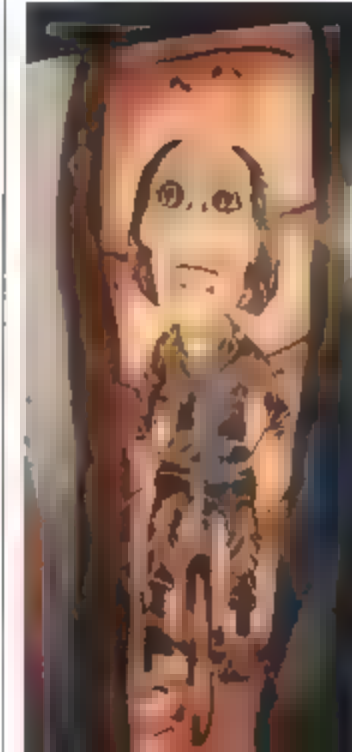
Steve takes two classes with Jim, drops by his office, feels uncomfortable calling him Jim, but Jim insists, as he does with all his students, breaking down the barriers, questioning power. He lets his students have the run of the place, and Steve wants in, but he worries about offending, always feels like he's intruding. "In the first year or so, he was always apologetic, extremely deferential, and seemed sheepish about taking up my time," says Thomas. "He always asked, 'Is this okay if I?' I'd respond with something like, 'Steve, it's as much your office as mine—just don't turn off the Unix servers.'"

In the fall of 2004, Steve meets Kevin, who has a half-burned Bush/Cheney American flag on his door. Steve is excited. "I could never do that," he tells Kevin. Too worried what others think of him. Steve has an anti-Bush sticker, but a half-burned flag?

Kevin is someone he can talk to, finally, about all of it—the methodology of Columbine, going through weapons choices, the plan, each step, what they could have done differently. Kevin is a fast talker, smart as hell, quiet and calm but well versed in all this stuff. Randy



Halloween 2007, Steve e-mailed pictures of himself dressed as Jigsaw from Saw to many of his friends at NIU, including his old girlfriend Deyana Matt. Two days later he got Jigsaw tattooed on his forearm.



Weaver, *The Turner Diaries*, Waco, Oklahoma. The federal government. There's a new angle here. Before it was Bundy, Dahmer, Hitler, and he read about the occult and conspiracy on the side, but the two can be brought together.

Libertarians, that's what Tim Neubeck says they are. Another new friend. Steve convinces him to switch his major to political science. They talk about the individual. Steve's favorite author is Nietzsche. The superman, above moral code. Only the weak let themselves be ruled by morality. They talk about Firearm Owner's ID cards. "It's back to the days of the Hitler regime," Steve says. "The government is trying to track us."

Because of Jim Thomas's influence, Steve's academic focus has begun to shift toward sociology and criminology. He helps found the NIU chapter of the American Correctional Association on campus and becomes its treasurer and later VP. He gets Kevin to join. He tells Thomas, "I've been focusing on academics so that I can have something to show for myself since getting out of the group home."

He also has a new girlfriend—an eccentric art student, Deyana Matt. So now he's doing better socially as well.

Senior year, he acs his statistics course, toughest course out there, ends up number three out of ninety.

Steve asks the professor, Charles Cappell, to write him a letter for grad school. "[Steve] is extremely patient and calm when tutoring students who are stressed out about statistics and the high standards imposed on them. He has the highest ethical and academic standards, he thinks abstractly and analytically, and relates at an emotional and empathetic level with others."

Imagine him in the sociology lab where he tutored. Carefully groomed, long-sleeved shirt, normal. No tattoos showing, no black trench coat. No slurred speech from meds. His breathing is regular, his body feels okay, his head is clear. They come to him stressed out, but he's able to show them how to work the problems, able to calm them, inspires several of them, even, to apply for grad school. He affects their lives in a positive way, and they love him for it.

One of the students is a cute brunette, Jessica Baty. She first met him in class a few semesters back. "He would make me so frustrated in class because every time that I wanted to say something, [he] would always say it first. During lectures, I remember sitting across the room from him and just wondering about him."

Now she's wondering even more. She writes him an anonymous e-mail. What does a girl have to do to get your attention? Steve jokes at first. He tells her that he has a girlfriend. Yet they keep writing e-mails. Eventually Steve puts the pieces together—figures out it's Jessica. And soon Steve breaks up with Deyana.

Their first date is at a local DeKalb bar for a drink. "Steven told me how pretty I was and

he made me laugh," says Jessica. "After a few drinks, we walked to a twenty-four-hour diner. We laughed as we stumbled down the street to the restaurant. It was so easy to talk to him, and there was no tension or pretending to be someone else."

Steve wraps his arms around her, and it's like the rest of the world doesn't matter anymore. Their own little island.

They graduate together in May 2006 and make plans to attend NIU for graduate school in the fall. And then the impossible happens—more impossible than being off meds for five years straight. More impossible than finding an amazing girlfriend.

Steve wins a Deans' Award. It is the highest honor given to undergraduates.

"Tony got it because of everything Jim has done and said for me," he tells Jessica, but she knows he's proud.

THE UNWINDING STARTS SLOW His mother's death. A battle with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease—a battle he didn't see much of. She dies in September 2006. He hasn't been close to her in years. Thinks she hated him, was afraid of him. So he hated her, and now this. No time to make anything up.

He doesn't show emotion or tell people about his mother's death. He doesn't take time off school and won't let Jessica go to the wake, but he calls her and tells her he wishes she was here.

Then more change. He's just started grad classes, and now it looks like he isn't going to be able to stay at NIU. The university has cut half the faculty from its sociology department through attrition, stripped the advanced courses, especially in criminology. Jim writes a recommendation letter, and Steve and Jessica apply to the grad program in social work at the University of Illinois, three hours south in Champaign. A smart move academically, a necessary move. But Steve hates the idea of having to move to a new place, having to make new friends.

Things are falling apart with Jessica, too. Messy breakups for everyone to see. On again. Off again. The most recent one, she came teary-eyed to class, embarrassing him. It's his fault, but he doesn't want everyone to see.

Seung-Hui Cho kills thirty-two at Virginia Tech. Steve's excited. He's firing off e-mails. "Crazy," he tells Jessica, and sends her Cho's writings.

He's also freaking out about jobs now. His future. He mastered college, but what next? He bombed the LSAT in the fall, taking it too soon after his mother's death. So law school is out. And social work, or becoming a corrections officer? They're Jim's influence, the influence of a good teacher. Is that enough? Does he really want to spend his whole life in that field? Maybe he should focus on political science or public administration. But really, he has no idea.

He stops going to his grad classes at NIU. He doesn't need them anyway, since his course work won't transfer to U. of I. He gets interested in buying guns. He applies for his firearms permit in December and receives it in January. He's been out of the mental-health system for five years now, so he's eligible. (In the fall he'll write a paper titled "(No) Crazy's with Guns!" questioning whether people on antipsychotics should be allowed to buy firearms.) In February he buys a Glock 45-caliber handgun, a powerful weapon. He buys a shotgun and another handgun the next month. Goes to the shooting range instead of school. He'll get F's in his classes, but doesn't seem to care.

Then Seung-Hui Cho kills thirty-two at Virginia Tech. April 16, 2007. Steve's excited. He's firing off e-mails. "Crazy," he tells Jessica, and sends her Cho's writings. He's all over this with Kevin, studying everything. The writings, where Cho bought his guns, his mental-health history, the photos, the planning, the timing, even his favorite songs.

"I think it was mostly a sociological interest," Kevin says. "He was interested in what was going on in the mind of Cho, and why it was so successful, and how someone could do it, how they could pull it off." Steve tells Kevin that Cho "obviously planned it out well," and he mentions chaining the doors. Creating chaos. All the careful planning, like Columbine.

He and Jessica move to Champaign in June, rent an apartment together. Separate bedrooms. They're not a couple anymore. Relationships just don't work out for him. And renting an apartment with her is probably a bad idea, but it saves on rent, they can share books, and she's his closest friend.

He's falling apart, though. He knows it, and Jessica knows it. He checks five times to make sure the car is locked, three times for the apartment door, checks the stove. He and Jessica drive somewhere, but he has to turn around, drive back to check again that the door is locked. He washes his hands twenty times a day, has to wash the remote for the TV if anyone else touches it, has to wash if Jessica's cat touches him, hates all the hair everywhere. He can't sleep, gets up to check again that he's paid all his bills, checks the alarm clock three times. He's anxious and worried about everything, paranoid. He doesn't feel safe. He misses his friends at NIU, misses Jim's office, misses the sociology lab. He has these mood swings, totally out of control, and he gets really irritable, picks fights with Jessica.

"You have to see someone," she tells him. "You need a mood stabilizer."

August 3, 2007. He makes an appointment for himself at McKinley Health Center on campus at U. of I. The social worker notes that Steve is very worried about confidentiality. Doesn't want this on his record. Steve doesn't mention the mood swings. Or the suicide attempts. He doesn't tell them much of anything. He says he's interested in medications, worried about weight gain. She makes him an appointment with a psychiatrist three days later.

That same day he decides to buy guns. Perhaps it's just a whim. Or maybe he's concerned that his visit to the hospital will go on his mental-health record and his gun license will be revoked. He drives to Tony's Guns & Ammo, which is just Tony's house. Steve trades in his Glock 45 caliber, his 22-caliber pistol, and his 20-gauge shotgun. He buys a Sig Sauer .380.

He debates returning to McKinley. He doesn't want to go, but he really is falling apart. He knows this. So he goes.

"Steve shows elements of both social anxiety and obsessive/compulsive disorder," records the doctor who sees him. "The working diagnosis is Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder with the DSM-IV code 300.3. My plan is to start Prozac 10 mg each morning with breakfast."

The first time he's been on Prozac is six and a half years.

But it's still not enough. As he's sitting in one of his classes at U. of I., his heart starts beating fast and hard. It's like a fist in there, balled up. He looks around, but no one seems to notice. He's short of breath, getting dizzy, disoriented. He's going to pass out, right here in front of everyone. He holds on to the desk, though, gets through the moment, gets out of there.

A month later he's back at McKinley, September 4, says his mother's death was a traumatic experience, still is. The doctor notes it in his evaluation. Steve worries, also, about his father, who has diabetes and hypertension and recently had a stroke. He's anxious all the time in this new place, feels judged, worries what people think of him. He's hiding all the time, still doing well in his schoolwork, so no one would suspect. He's good at hiding. The doctor asks him whether he's planning to kill himself or anyone else. He says no. They up his Prozac to 50 milligrams a day and add Xanax, 0.5 milligrams a couple times a day as needed for anxiety.

Around this time, he calls his sister, Susan. Their relationship has always been rough. She resented all the attention he sucked in high school, and he resented how perfect she seemed. But today he's feeling okay, he wants to talk. He tells her that he thinks he might be gay.

They go to dinner, a chance to talk and reconcile. But Susan thinks he's being paranoid, because he won't use his credit card. They could steal the number. And just like that, he's back to hating her. Susan's just like his mother—only sees him as a fuckup, he thinks.

He confesses everything to Jessica. He's a puddle of tears, sobbing that she was here all along. Why couldn't he see that?

He starts his new job as a correctional officer at Rockville Correctional Facility in Indiana the following week. He's stopped going to classes for this job, and isn't tutoring, either, or working as a research assistant. He's made sacrifices, and the job isn't what he expected. He enjoys parts of the training. They teach him how to use a Remington 12-gauge shotgun. He has to take a test detailing how to load and unload it. But according to Jessica, he took this job to help people, and instead he feels like he's only going to be moving the inmates around from place to place.

Then something stupid happens, something maddening. He's driving to work, early in the morning, talking with Jessica on the phone, passing endless farmland, cornfields, barns, and he misses his turn, drives past. This job is ridiculously inflexible. If you're late even one minute, you have to restart your training from scratch.

So he turns around and speeds back, eighty-four miles an hour in a fifty-five zone, and then sees the flashing lights. So that's it. Why shouldn't everything in his life fall apart?

He drives to Nick Eblen's house—Nick is a training officer and has been letting him crash there some nights to shorten the commute—and clears out all his stuff. He leaves a two-page apology note, over the top. "I sincerely apologize for any embarrassment or shame that I may have caused by my stupid actions." What he can't quite put into words, though, is how he's just doomed. "I may have graduated at the top of my college class, but I now understand that book smarts don't translate into common sense. In college, and by past girlfriends, I was often told that I was too smart for my own good. I now understand what was meant by this comment."

A couple days later, he fights with his former NIU friends on WebBoard. It's an online discussion forum he still has access to. They're talking about sex offenders. There's a gay grad student at NIU who works with them, and this is a guy Steve respected. But one day Jessica is looking around online, because she works in rehabilitating juvenile sex offenders, and she finds this guy on the list. He's a former sex offender himself.

On WebBoard Steve exposes him for the hypocrite he thinks he is. Disgusting, a horrible, horrible person. Steve is vicious, relentless

in his attacks. So vicious that Jim Thomas and Steve's friends are shocked by the whole exchange. This isn't the Steve they know. They can't make any sense of it.

What they don't know is that Steve has gone off his Prozac because it was causing acne. They didn't even know he was on Prozac in the first place.

He goes back on meds a few days later, but around this time something primal locks in. First it's the guns. Now it's sex. He begins surfing the Casual Encounters section of Craigslist.

He tries to hook up with "Katie," with her 44D's, but that doesn't work out, so he moves on. Meets a male biochemistry professor from U. of I. They give each other blowjobs.

Then he meets Kelly, an undergrad. In introduction he describes himself as "very gentleman like and respectful in person, but have a wild side." She says meeting in a public place first "isn't absolutely necessary as long as you don't plan to chop me up and store me in my freezer. So... don't do that.")" He reassures her, "I'm not a serial killer/psycho or anything." Then he seals the deal: "Just so you know, I am very oral, and love to give it—True story. I have a particularly strong tongue, as I used to play the Tenor Saxophone when I was younger."

He drives to her apartment for sex on October 23. Long blond hair, round and busty and wholesome, a bit of a redneck. They have a similar dark sense of humor, love the macabre. They're both excited about *Saw IV* coming out on Friday. He has a great time with her, fun sex, and they spend a lot of time e-mailing and on the phone over the next few weeks.

She e-mails him on October 27. Calls him "oh-so-old-and-wise-one." He feels understood and looked up to. He confesses to her: "I mention family when I talk with others and say that they are doing fine, but the truth is I really don't have much of a family. My justification is that I don't want to ever let people know this about me so they don't think I'm strange. It's rare that I even see members of my family. I'm not sure why I'm telling you all of this, but it's 4:45 a.m., so... let me rant about how fantastic *Saw IV* is!"

But not even Kelly is enough to satisfy his appetite now. Steve sets up a meeting with "Tracy" the next night at a bar in Champaign called the Phoenix. According to police testimony, they go to a hotel, the Econo Lodge. It's right off the freeway, the crack-and-ko section of town. They have sex. In the morning he's a gentleman, buys coffee and cigarettes.

A few nights later he drives to where "Tracy" lives, in Mattoon, Illinois, brings a dozen roses and a couple movies. *Snakes on a Plane* and *Mr. Brooks*, about an upstanding father who's actually a killer.

But it doesn't help. He can't control himself and he knows it.

He confesses everything to Jessica. He calls her at work, tells her he's not gay. She comes home to find him a puddle of tears on the carpet. He's sobbing that she was here all along. Why couldn't he see that?

HALLOWEEN 2007

Steve stands in his bedroom dressed all in black, with white gloves. He takes the Jigsaw mask down from his bookcase, carefully holds it to his left side, face turned toward him, a puppet, a piece of himself, his alter ego. White face, red-target cheeks, the sadistic killer-narrator from *Saw*. He and Jessica aren't going anywhere tonight. She's busy with work, and there's no love after his night away with "Tracy."

Everything has fallen apart this fall, everything. His job at Rockville. Jim Thomas and his NIU friends on WebBoard. Jessica. Susan. The panic attack. Prozac and side effects. Craigslist.

But Steve dresses up anyway, puts the mask on. He's Jigsaw now. He gets Jessica to take photos of him, arms outstretched, coming to get you, holding a mallet cocked back, ready to swing.

He e-mails the photos to friends. Look at me. One of his classmates, Poppy Ann Graham, says later that she thought it was "creepy—like there were two sides to Steve."

Two days later, November 2, Steve has Jigsaw tattooed over his entire right forearm. He's not covering up an old tattoo, like he's done in the past. This is something he wants. He pays \$700 for it. Jigsaw riding a tricycle through a pool of blood, with bloody cuts across Steve's forearm as background. He's a cutter, and he needs to help himself, needs to learn the value of his life. Every time Steve looks down, Jigsaw will be there, reminding him.

Thanksgiving 2007

Steve shows Jessica all his mental-health records before destroying them, insists she read them. He wants her to know everything.

They're in Lakeland, Florida, to help his father, who has gone into diabetic shock after a car accident. Steve has long talks with his father, their best visit in years. They talk about Susan. They talk about his mother. It's good for Steve. But it also enrages Steve. He writes Susan afterward that he now knows "Mom never truly forgave me for being a 'bad/delinquent' teenager and she never trusted me... even after I spent four years in college earning near perfect grades." This is why Susan must hate him so much, as well. "Sometimes," he writes, "I cannot believe that we share the same blood."

Christmas 2007

Steve's father is in town and they go to dinner with Jessica. They need to drop his dad off at Susan's, but Steve's vowed never to see her again. Something like, "Just walk my father to the door and bring her her present," he says to Jessica. It's a box of coal. Jessica laughed when he first told her, but she doesn't think it's funny now. He actually has a box of coal for Susan, wrapped in Christmas paper. She's going to flip.

Jessica carries the present to the door.

After the shootings, Susan tells the police she's surprised he didn't come to kill her.

Two days after Christmas, Steve goes to

Steve's been playing Call of Duty 4. He responds that "practicing with virtual weapons translates into?" and doesn't say more.

Tony's Guns & Ammo, buys a Hi-Point .380 and a 12-gauge shotgun.

BY NEW YEAR'S, Steve has begun to isolate himself from his friends. Joe Russo tries to contact him, doesn't hear back until February 13.

January 7, 2008, he goes with Jessica to get a new tattoo—a pentagram, sign of the devil.

A few days later he's back in touch with Kelly by e-mail. It's been some time since they spoke. He said he needed separation. But now he's back. He sends her an e-mail about three T-shirts he's bought from the Bounty Hunter Web site, including the one that says TERRORIST with an AK-47.

On the twentieth, Jessica is away, so he invites Kelly over for sex. Kelly offers her place instead. She sends him an e-mail later joking that her job is driving her to the brink of mass murder. Steve's been playing Call of Duty 4, a first-person shooter game. He responds that "practicing with virtual weapons translates into?" and doesn't say more.

He contacts the Navy recruiter in Champaign on January 29 and says he'd like to enlist. They discuss his previous discharge and use of Prozac in the past, and it seems that nothing will actually prohibit Steve from re-enlisting. He thinks he'll have to pass a psychiatric exam, though. And he can't be on meds, which he's been on since August.

Perhaps this is a way out. The daily structure. The discipline.

He stops taking the Prozac, and just like when he went off it in the fall, everything gets worse. His obsessive-compulsive disorder, his checking behaviors, his anxiety. Jessica recalls him sitting secretively on the couch during this period. He keeps his laptop screen facing away from her, closes it if she gets too close. Sometimes she's talking, and he doesn't even realize she's been talking. She tells him he's acting strange, she won't get off his case until finally he admits he's off his meds and tells her why. She thinks the military is a stupid waste of his education and intelligence. Steve disagrees.

January 31, he sends Kelly a link to the V-Tech Rampage shooting video game.

February 3, Steve buys extra magazines for his Hi-Point .380 pistol.

February 4, Kelly asks Steve about his weekend. "Email me back if you're not busy. :)"

"No, I'm not too busy," Steve writes back. "Just plotting world domination and all. Did you hear about the 'man in black' at Lane Bryant? Crazy World!" Steve is referring to the armed robber who shot and killed five people execution-style two days before in a botched robbery of a clothing store in suburban Chicago.

The next day, he buys gear from Bounty Hunter and Top Gun Supply and writes a check to himself for \$3,000 cash, then changes it to \$3,001. Perhaps it's harder to track that way. He also buys a spring-assisted knife.

February 5, he keeps buying. Two 9mm magazines and holsters from Able Ammo. He pays extra shipping costs for second-day air and goes to a Marilyn Manson concert that night with Jessica.

He describes the Manson concert in an e-mail to Kelly: "Manson was AMAZING live. Probably the best part was him burning a bible on stage. On a hilarious side note, some of the audience members were Neo-Nazi party members and held up a 3rd Reich (Nazi) flag throughout most of the concert."

The next day, it's back to Tony's Guns & Ammo. He buys a Glock 9mm and a Remington 12-gauge shotgun, a model similar to the one they trained him on at Rockville. He makes a reservation for a room in a Best Western hotel in DeKalb. He takes a cash advance against his Bank of America Visa for \$5,000. He buys a Gator GC-Dread hard-shell guitar case for the shotgun, requests next-day delivery.

He goes to class on Thursday, February 7. He argues with Sandra Thompson, one of his classmates. He thinks she's annoying, tries to put her in her place for a few minutes, but the others take her side and tell him to shut up. They're all ganging up against him, he thinks.

He's back on Craigslist after class, compulsively now, checking the Erotic Services section. He posts his own ad, too.

He meets "Megan" that night at the corner of North Prospect and Bloomington in Champaign, just off the highway, the same crack-and-heroin neighborhood where he had sex with "Tracy" in the fall. She's with her friend "Elyse," who doesn't look bad either. "Megan" gets into his car. They park behind a building near the Econo Lodge. Steve on top, she tells the police later.

The next day, Friday the eighth, he writes a check to himself for cash, \$4,600, then changes that to \$4,601. He buys stamps for the packages he's planning to send to Jessica. He talks with "Katie." Drives to her place. She's lit candles. He doesn't feel like talking. They have sex, and afterward, he tells her he's going out of town.

On Sunday, February 10, Steve talks with his father on the phone. He also talks with his godfather, Richard Grafer, makes plans for the next weekend. He'll visit. They'll play chess.

He tells Jessica he's leaving tomorrow, Monday, to visit his godfather, because he's in poor health.

He meets again with "Megan" that night at Walgreens. They have sex in the car again. They're back and forth eighteen times on the phone that night, dirty talk, and Steve also calls "Elyse."

In the morning, about 10:00, he tells Jessica not to go to work.

"Just stay. Just hang out with me today."

"I have to go to work," she says.

She doesn't know, and he can't tell her.

In their apartment, he saws off the barrel of the shotgun. The guitar case, the two new guns, the extra magazines and holsters—he's hidden these things from her. He duct-tapes half of the inside of the guitar case, black tape—a riddle the police will never quite figure out. He puts the Remington 12-gauge inside, loaded. Picks up the case and it's not too heavy. He leaves his old shotgun in the closet. It's for skeet or birds, not designed for killing people.

He's bought longer ammo clips for the pistols. They hold thirty-three rounds each. But the problem is they're so long, he'll have to carry the pistols in his hands. He won't be able to use the holsters and hide everything under his coat. And he wants to use the shotgun first, to create confusion. And for theatrical effect. That's Kevin's theory in hindsight.

So he leaves the long clips, leaves a lot of the extra ammo, too. He's not going to have more than a couple minutes. After Virginia Tech, the police will come quickly. They're not going to screw up like that again and let someone walk around from place to place for hours.

He makes his bed, crisp, and gathers everything. He puts the pistols and ammo in a duffel bag.

He leaves in the afternoon, drives almost three hours to DeKalb, checks into the Best Western hotel. Uses his Chase Visa and goes to his room, number 134, then calls the front desk on his cell phone after five minutes and checks out after ten minutes. Something is wrong. Maybe it's the credit card. He could be tracked.

The Travelodge has a big black tarp out front covering the empty pool, chain-link fence all around. The place is a dump. Steve pays in cash.

He goes to his room, sends Kelly an e-mail. Tells her he's watching MSNBC and listening to Manson's "Coma White." He tells her he's going to close his e-mail account soon because of spam, asks her to call him later.

Later, Jessica calls. It's a short conversation, seven and a half minutes. He tells her, "I'm sorry things did not turn out differently for us. Thank you for not holding anything against me. I appreciate what you have done for me. I love you."

He never says, "I love you." She thinks this is odd. She thinks he's getting depressed.

He gets a call from Kelly and talks with

her for half an hour. She asks what he's doing for Valentine's Day, and he says he isn't going to be around. He also says he wishes he'd met her before things "got so fucked up."

The next day, Tuesday, February 12, he buys books for Jessica on Amazon, all to help her with her studies. He includes the gift message, "You are the best Jessica! You've done so much for me, and I truly do love you. You will make an excellent psychologist or social worker someday! Don't forget about me! Love, Steven Kazmierczak."

He also buys her an iPhone and memory sticks, a purse, sterling-silver peace earrings, data cables, and CDs, and he wants to buy her a wedding ring. He calls her in the afternoon, but she's at work.

Jessica calls him back and they talk for a little more than ten minutes. He asks her what her ring size is and what finger a woman wears her wedding ring on. He tells her she'll be receiving a package in the mail from him. She can't open it until Valentine's Day or it won't make any sense.

He talks to his father for about fifteen minutes. Then he gets a call from the Navy recruiter, Nole Scoville, and puts him off, says he's too busy to come in to the office. A last chance to go another direction.

He goes straight back onto Amazon.

He orders Jessica a platinum ArtCarved Montclair six-millimeter ring for \$1,400. They speak three times that evening. He tells her everything is going well with his godfather.

He talks with Kevin that evening, too, for a little more than half an hour, and it's a normal conversation. He doesn't sense anything wrong with Steve, maybe a bit formal on the final goodbye. He talks with Joe Russo, too, and Joe doesn't think anything is wrong. The conversation ends as usual, with "Talk to you later."

Kelly sends him an e-mail, asking to get together, perhaps karaoke or a B-movie video night. He answers her the next morning, Wednesday, February 13, tells her, "Friday may work, but I'll have to see what's going on."

He goes to the post office and sends Jessica

Steve's last call to Jessica is just before midnight on February 13, wishing her Happy Valentine's Day, promising he'll see her tomorrow. "Goodbye, Jessica."

a package with a return address of 1074 Stevenson C, NIU, DeKalb, IL 60115, his dorm address at NIU. He puts down the sender as Robert Paulson, one of the army of mag-gots in *Fight Club* who gains a name only after death.

Steve's last call to Jessica is just before midnight on February 13, wishing her Happy Valentine's Day, promising he'll see her tomorrow. "Goodbye, Jessica," he says.

He closes all his e-mail accounts, erases the mail. Takes the SIM card out of his phone, the hard drive out of his laptop, and hides them where they will never be found.

VALENTINE'S DAY. 3 04 P M Cole Hall Room 100. The end of class. Intro to Ocean Science. Many of the students are gone, since they had a test two days before.

The stage door behind the screen bursts open. Steve walks abruptly onto the stage. He stands for the briefest of moments just looking at the class, then he raises the shotgun.

He fires into the front row of students.

Chaos. Multiple students hit, everyone rising to run. But students farther back in the class still think it might be some kind of joke. Confusion.

Joe Peterson, the instructor, takes a few steps back to a stage door like the one Steve entered. He pulls on the door, but it's locked. He pulls again and again, trying to open it as Steve fires his shotgun two more times into the students. They're running away from him down the aisle.

"He's reloading!" someone yells. And now others are running.

The auditorium has three sections of seats separated by two aisles, and these aisles are the only way out. Most of the students happen to be on the same side of the classroom Steve is on, so he has a clear shot straight down the aisle.

Joe is hiding behind his podium, up on stage with Steve. The stage is large, and he's at the other end. "I could hear the click of the plastic shotgun shells as he was reloading," Joe says.

Steve has been trained by the Indiana prison system how to use a 12-gauge. He stands in one place, not panicking, not rushing.

Steve fires the shotgun three more times, shooting students in the back as they bunch up in the aisle, trying to escape. At this distance, the pellets are spraying wide, hitting many with each shot, wounding and not killing. That eerie quiet again between each round.

"I had two thoughts during his second reloading," Joe says. "I remembered that girl at Columbine hiding under her desk who got shot at point-blank range. I also thought, I just got married. I'm not going to do this to my wife."

He takes off, jumps down from the stage toward the aisle to escape, except there are students on the floor everywhere, so he has to use his hands to spider-walk over bodies. "I was keeping my eyes on him as I went,"

says Joe. "I knew not to turn my back on him. I was halfway up the aisle when he turned and looked right at me. He had just reloaded the shotgun, but he dropped it. I didn't see him reach for the Glock. It was so fast, he just suddenly had it, and he fired at me. There was no change of expression, not even excitement. It was like if you're repainting a room at home, painting the walls, and you realize you missed a few spots, it was that mechanical."

This is Steve's first of forty-eight shots with his pistols, after six with the shotgun.

"I felt something like a strong flick on my left arm. I was wearing three layers, so the bullet snagged. I felt something hot and round fall out of my sweater and hit my knuckle. I just thought, I'm really lucky. And I also thought, I'm going to get out of here."

Brian Karpes, Joe's teaching assistant, initially chased after Joe, but he couldn't get far. Aisles too packed. So he dove behind the podium from which Joe had just fled.

"I tried to peer around the podium to get a look at him, but the minute I saw him, he turned and saw me. He turned and fired, and he pulled the trigger of the Glock multiple times. He just kept shooting me. I got hit right in the head. It felt like getting hit with a bat. As I fell to the floor face-first, all I could think was, 'I got shot and I'm dead.' I hit the floor with my eyes closed and a ringing sound in my ear, and I thought this was literally the sound of my dying, going into the darkness."

Bullets that miss are exploding against the concrete and tearing up Brian's side with shrapnel.

"After a while, though, he moved on to others, and I realized I was still breathing and not dead, and I realized I should just play dead."

Steve walks calmly up the aisle, shooting students with his pistol as he goes. Aiming carefully. "It would be quiet for a few moments," Brian says. "All I remember is just unbelievable quiet—then a few more shots. Every time he'd shoot, I'd jump, and every time I'd jolt like this, I was yelling to myself, 'You've gotta lay still.'"

Dan Parmenter is visiting the class to be with his girlfriend, Lauren Debrauwere, on Valentine's Day. He's a jock, a good-looking guy. He's in the front row, tries to shield Lauren, and Steve shoots him five times, kills him. Then shoots Lauren. Then the girl next to her.

It's only a couple minutes, but it seems to stretch on forever.

Gina Jaquez, a student, is lying on the floor in the fourth or fifth row with her friend Cathy—Catalina Garcia—and classmate Maria Ruiz-Santana. She hears several students scream for Steve to stop shooting. But he keeps shooting. He walks up and down the aisle, works his way along the rows. He walks closer to her. She can see his shoes under the seats, only five or

"Every time he'd shoot, I'd jump, and every time I'd jolt like this, I was yelling to myself, 'You've gotta lay still.'"

ten feet away.

He keeps shooting, a few rounds at a time. Five dead. Eighteen injured. She's right there next to him, waiting, terrified.

Then he walks away, hops back onto the stage. He's shot forty-seven bullets.

One more shot. Then silence. Gina waits. Waits a bit longer. Finally, she taps her friend Cathy on the back. "Let's go, Cathy," she says. But then she sees blood on the floor near Cathy's hip, and Cathy isn't moving. She shakes her, and then she tries to get Maria off the ground. Tries to pick her up, but she won't move, either.

"I'VE DECIDED THAT I have some questions that might seem odd," Jessica writes to Kevin a month later. "I want to know exactly where he shot himself. Is that bad? When I picture him, I see him shooting himself in the temple. Does that seem right? He doesn't seem like a gun-in-the-mouth person. Sorry if this is disturbing."

"So we decided he's not a gun-in-the-mouth type of person," Kevin says. "He's just not. She thought that, and I felt the same way. Probably the temple."

"I had to look up pictures of what people look like after shooting themselves like he did," Jessica writes later. "I probably shouldn't have done that, because I've been having nightmares since I looked it up, but it just reaffirms my feeling that he was someone else that day. It wasn't really Steve."

She still sleeps in his shirts. Has her new apartment decorated with pictures of them together.

She beats herself up about warning signs, and also about the last day she saw him, February 11, three days before the shooting.

"You can write a book about me someday," he told her.

"Why would I want to write a book about you?" she asked him.

"I can be your case study," he said.

On the way to the Marilyn Manson concert the week before, he asked her, "What do you think happens when you die?"

A few months earlier, he told her, "One day I might just disappear and you will never find me. Nobody will ever find me."

A few months before that, he told her, "If anything happens, don't tell anyone about me." ■

The Tunnel

[continued from page 97] to stop digging for an emergency head count, his clothes would be clean. He tied pillow stuffing onto his knees and elbows and pulled a face mask over his mouth. Murphy chatted with Marble Spooner watched the door. A towel hung at the end of the first bunk bed, hiding any light or activity from the tunnel area. This violated prison rules, but they took it down when they cleaned the room each morning before anyone could notice.

Hoffman squeezed through the hole, dropping into the vertical chamber, now three feet wide and eight feet deep, three feet lower than the five-foot foundation footer. For the first several nights of digging, they had lam on their stomachs and reached into the hole, scooping out bowls of dirt until they'd dug all they could from the surface. Just after midnight on New Year's Day 2007, Hoffman slipped through the tiny half-moon into the hole for the first time, folding his body like a carnival contortionist.

He had dug the walls as straight as possible to prevent collapse, advice from a Discovery Channel show on diamond mining in Africa. But the harrowing work was yet to come. Just beyond the foundation wall, a load of dirt dropped onto his chest, the first of many cave-ins. "During Phase One, Murphy had checked out books on building construction and soil conservation from the prison library. Could they dig through sand without collapse? Well, who read several newspapers a day, had answered that question: Prisoners had burrowed a six-hundred-foot tunnel through the sand at Camp Bucca in Iraq. Hoffman had tried using metal-framed chairs to support the tunnel, but that only hindered his movements. Instead he dug freestyle, burrowing a tube eighteen inches high and twenty-nine inches wide.

He wriggled down the tunnel with his cereal bowl and the fluorescent reading light tethered to an extension cord. Another light hung in the chamber, illuminating the entrance. At the halfway point, twenty-one feet from the cell wall, he shimmied under the first fence, its spiked ends poking through the tunnel ceiling. He had reached that point in mid-February, clipping the fence with his bowl and agonizing over whether the motion and vibration detectors strung through the fence would pick up his movements.

He crawled to the end, unfolded a plastic pillow cover, and started digging, piling maybe

"Cramming my five-foot nine-inch frame into a three-foot by three-foot space was difficult. But trying to dig from that position was even more difficult, because I had to dig underneath my own body. To make matters worse, there was a live 120-volt wire running along the floor just above me." —Hoffman

"Every time I'd plunge the bowl into the earth, dirt would collapse all over me. I never knew when it would stop or if it would continue to bury me. I knew and understood the difference between dying for nothing and dying for something. I had survived sixteen years in prison because I did not want to die for nothing. Dying in the tunnel would have been for something. My way. My choice." —Hoffman

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The Tunnel

five bags' worth onto the sheet. He could dig a couple feet per night, seventy bags of dirt, fourteen trips each way.¹⁵ He scooted back into the chamber, filled the bags, and passed them up to the others. They stored hundreds of bags in the wall lockers and under the beds during the night. If a roaming guard swept his flashlight into the cell, he'd see a dark room and four sleeping prisoners, one being a pile of pillows.

Now forty feet from the prison walls, Hoffman gouged the bowl into the ceiling, digging these last few feet at an upward angle. They figured the outer fence was about thirty-five feet but dug farther, not wanting to pop up between the two fences.

Must be close now. And there, poking through the dirt, the wispy hairs of grass roots.

Hoffman checked his watch. Nearly time for the 4:00 A.M. count. He wriggled back down the tunnel, stripped off his work clothes, and climbed into bed.

He told the crew about the roots. We made it.

Marble passed by and work resumed. Murphy suited up and dropped into the hole to load the bags passed down by Spooner and Shavkey. He dragged them a few feet and scooted forward. Move and scoot,¹⁶ move and scoot. Tight spaces had freaked him out ever since his sister locked him in a toy box, but down here he controlled his life, a rare moment in prison.

Murphy dropped chunks of summer sausage into the chili and ramen noodles and stirred the pot. Working through the nights, they often missed breakfast and slept through lunch, so they prepared many meals in the room, with food bought from the prison store. During the summer and fall, Murphy cooked stuffed peppers and zucchini stew with vegetables from the prison garden. On Christmas Shavkey cooked up batches of burritos, nachos, and Mexican rice, passing them out to his friends. The Kinross food isn't bad. But homemade food, well, that's a little bit of normal, a taste of the outside.

They had washed down the lockers, walls, and bunks; swept and mopped the floor; then showered. Shavkey and Spooner had both gone to work.

¹⁵ "Look at it this way: Starting when the tunnel was just 10 feet long, crawling that 10 feet 28 times is 280 feet of crawling in one night. I dug two feet per night. So the next time I dug I'd have to crawl 12 feet 28 times. Then the next night it would be 14 feet. The tunnel ended up being 40 feet long. So I crawled over two miles. Not crawling on hands and knees, either, but on elbows and knees like a sniper's crawl." —Hoffman

¹⁶ "The one time I felt truly nervous was when the lights went out while I was putting the bags back into the tunnel. In prison there is always light 24-7 to some degree. So it had been decades since I'd experienced total darkness. To make it more interesting, Joe had just finished stacking a bunch of bags behind me that I would have to move up in order to get out. I thought to myself that this is what a grave is like, only I'm still alive." —Murphy

Hoffman sat at the table drinking coffee.

"What would you do if it came down to being caught and being sent back to prison?" he asked Murphy. "Would you hurt someone? Kill someone?"

In the slow hours of the morning, before they dumped bags of dirt or slept, they'd talk about life after prison, and more so these days, with freedom so close. They spun their fantasies. Soft beds. Margaritas. People regarding them as men, not convicts. Men of worth, no longer tied to their pasts.

"No," Murphy said. If a life was to be lost avoiding a return to prison, he figured it should be his own.

Hoffman nodded.

"I'm the one choosing to escape," he said, "and no innocent person should die for the choice I've made."

They had asked Shavkey and Spooner the same question.

"Not unless I have to," Shavkey said.

Spooner's answer left them with no doubts. And if he hurt anyone, they'd be accessories to the crime. "Bad news," Murphy said. "Spooner's bad news."

Maybe they would buy some psychiatric meds in the yard and drug his food when Murphy cooked their last meal. Maybe Spooner would sleep through the escape.

They scheduled the escape for March 17, a Saturday, necessitated by Shavkey's week-day job. If he didn't show up, someone would come looking. They'd unload the bags after last count, tidy the room, stuff the beds, and slip through the tunnel. They figured guards would give just a casual glance during the 4:00 A.M. count, but even if the escape was detected, they would be off the Upper Peninsula before police could set up roadblocks or close the Mackinac Bridge. They'd stop in Saginaw, where Murphy would recover a pile of stashed loot, then on to Detroit, where Hoffman would do the same. They had arranged a boat to Canada. They could be in the safe house by noon. Just one problem: For months they had been working friends and family trying to arrange a getaway driver, but everything had fallen through. Hoffman had finished the tunnel, but with no ride and no plans to steal a car, they would wait. They'd write more letters, work the phones, and leave on March 24.

The temperature rose through March, which brought several days of rain. Water drained through the sandy soil and ate into the tunnel like acid, causing several minor cave-ins. And even with the rain, guards continued patrolling on the snowmobile, driving across the tunnel. Catastrophic collapse seemed imminent. Murphy fretted. "It's going to be okay," Hoffman said. "It's our destiny to make it, remember?" Destiny. That's how they'd started thinking about their impending freedom. How else to explain it, fate's smile never fading? They needed a few more days, a little more luck.

Maybe we will make it, Murphy told himself. He stepped from the room and walked to the hallway door and peered through the win-

dow. Officers often took smoke breaks on the porch, but it was empty now. Murphy looked through the fences, across the field, and imagined his freedom. Lying next to a woman. Using the bathroom and shower in private. Petting a dog. Walking the beach.

His eyes drifted to the right, and he flinched, terrified. A bare strip of ground led from their cell to the road. The snow above the tunnel had melted, warmed by their bodies and heat leaking into the tunnel from the cell.

No work planned for the night of March 23. They'd check the tunnel, then sleep, resting for the escape. But opening the tunnel, they found another cave-in, just beyond the foundation wall, and the night headed south from there. Bag after bag broke, and the rain had seeped into the tunnel, coating them in muddy slop, which soon covered the room and wall lockers. They worked until 8:30 A.M., through shift change. They ran through their routine for the last time—repacking, mopping, washing, wiping, showering—and then slept into the late afternoon. After dinner they worked the details and revisited the past night's frustrations.

"This tunnel won't last much longer," Murphy said. "No matter what, we have to go."

Besides, they wouldn't last much longer. Working through shift change? Sleeping until dinner? That's the sloppiness someone notices. And their bodies, my God, did their bodies hurt. Night after night, no time to mend. Elbows, knees, backs, throbbing as one giant ache.

"Listen," Murphy told Hoffman. "I've got to get something for the pain."

They had stored their own pain pills in the tunnel, in a cassette-tape box packed with toothbrushes, toothpaste, and Little Debbie snack cakes. Plastic bags held their civilian clothes. He and Hoffman walked into the yard, their corner store, to buy some meds.

They met Spooner and Shavkey on the blacktop, and the four gazed east, to the field, rehearsing their movements once they popped through the hole. Shavkey had found someone to pick them up. A car would be waiting at the rendezvous point. Five hours from now they'd no longer be numbers in blue jumpsuits. Three hundred miles away by dawn.

Shavkey headed in for a nap but returned a few minutes later.

"They're shaking down," he said.

"Don't worry," Hoffman said, ever the source of reassurance and order. They'd been through this many times and never had problems. Destiny, remember?

Spooner walked back to the unit. Minutes passed. Murphy's anxiety crept higher. This didn't feel right. "I'll start a fire in a trash can to get them out of there," he said.

Hoffman nodded. "Do it."

Spooner peeked in the room and saw Officer Victoria Manfrin facing the gap between the beds, looking down, hands at her sides, palms out. "Oh, my God," she said.

Oh, my God.

Spooner met Murphy halfway to the unit.

"We're hit," he said.

Panic flooded Murphy's gut. He walked into Easy Unit and down the hallway. A supervisor popped out of the room, calling for backup on his radio. He spotted Murphy. "Don't even think about it," he said. "Go to the dayroom."

At fifty feet, Hoffman could read Murphy's face. He'd seen the look before. But now his face showed not worry but finality.

"They found it," Murphy said. "It's over."

Confirmation tumbled from the loud-speakers:

Murphy, 183248, report to control center annex.

Hoffman, 174943, report to control center annex.

Shavkey, 239797, report to control center annex.

Spooner, 242676, report to control center annex.

They ignored the voice, stood in the sea of inmates, and smoked. Breaking that rule didn't matter much anymore.

Officers initially figured the hole for a hiding spot, perfect for stashing drugs or a shank. But they kept pulling out bags, and the hole didn't stop. They sounded the sirens, locked down the prison, and closed off the cell. This had become a crime scene.

Hoffman, Murphy, and Shavkey lawyered up, but Spooner talked, hoping for less time in the hole. He told investigators about Murphy being a fake snitch; he told them about the late-night conversations to distract Marble, about the weight, the dirt disposal, and the efforts to find a getaway driver. He told them that near the end and still with no ride, the plan changed—they'd steal a car and rob a bank. He told them he never wanted to be involved but was too scared to say anything, afraid Hoffman would put out a hit on him. He told them he was just waiting for the right time to come forward.

Had Spooner sold them out? Murphy and Hoffman didn't trust him, or the majority of the other inmates, for that matter. But the shakedown didn't originate from a tip, from Spooner or anyone else. Instead, Newland and Harwood credit good staff work, spying the out-of-place, just as they'd been trained. "It basically boiled down to some indicators that something was up," Newland said. "The day shift passed it along to the afternoon shift, and they started poking around."

What was the indicator? I asked Newland.

"I wish I could tell you," he said, "but poor Mr. Murphy would be heartbroken if he knew, because they had thought of so many things, obviously. But they overlooked a very minor one that staff picked up on."

They've thought about it plenty, reliving that last day. And now Hoffman thinks he knows: the towel.

Each night they hung it at the end of the first bunk, and every morning they removed it, part of the cleanup routine. On the last morning, working until 8:30 A.M. and then sleeping through the day, they forgot. To grab the towel, Manfrin would need to pull out the table.

Hoffman figures she stepped into the space between the two beds, and her right foot hit the soft spot. Bingo.

In another room, maybe that wouldn't have been cause for a shakedown. But these guys always played by the rules. Beds made. Trash picked up. Floor shiny. Lockers neat. This wasn't among the cleaner rooms, it was the cleanest.

"That room was spotless," Harwood said.

"Immaculate," Newland said. "Immaculate."

A towel hanging from a bunk bed. They'd screwed themselves on the simplest of details.

Murphy, Hoffman, Shavkey, and Spooner were dispersed to segregation units in maximum-security prisons across Michigan, where they spend their days in narrow cells outfitted with a mattress, a footlocker, and a stainless-steel sink and toilet. They take three ten-minute showers per week. They eat in their cells. Monday through Friday they can spend an hour a day outside, alone, in a small chain-link enclosure. Always alone, yet never without noise. Inmates yell between cells, arguing day and night. Some just scream and babble.¹⁷

¹⁷ "Most are starting to go crazy and others have long since found their way to la-la land. And I have to wonder how strong I am. How long can I last? I fear this hell I live in will one day rob me of my sanity, that I may become one of those who accept this life. I fear that God may not know me." —Murphy

Flanked by two guards, his ankles and wrists shackled, Murphy shuffled to the glass divider and eased into the chair at the Standish Maximum Correctional Facility. All these years later, he's back in the prison where he first met Hoffman. He picked up the phone receiver and wiped off the mouthpiece.

"There's a lot of nasty people in here," he said.

I was his first visitor in months, a break from the routine of segregation. With a year in the hole, he is still new to the block. Some have been there five, ten years. His face has gone soft and pale, no longer tanned and lean as in the pictures I'd seen from Kinross. He hasn't seen Hoffman since the discovery, but they exchange letters often. He doesn't hear much from Shavkey, and nothing from Spooner, neither of whom answered my letters. He still keeps in touch with some guys from Kinross, which now has a slew of closed-circuit cameras and beefed-up security procedures. After the escape attempt, he also resumed corresponding with Jessica, explaining his silence over those months. She told him that boasting about what he'd done wasn't pleasing to God, nor was the escape attempt. Maybe not, he said, but what's more instinctual than fleeing captivity?

"I'd rather be dead right now than be in here," he said.

Mostly, Tim Murphy sleeps. Twelve hours a day, more if he's lucky. Sleep is now his greatest refuge, his only escape. ■

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The Butterfly Effect, Part 2*

BY EVAN EISENBERG



*Also see This Way Out, October 2007.

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